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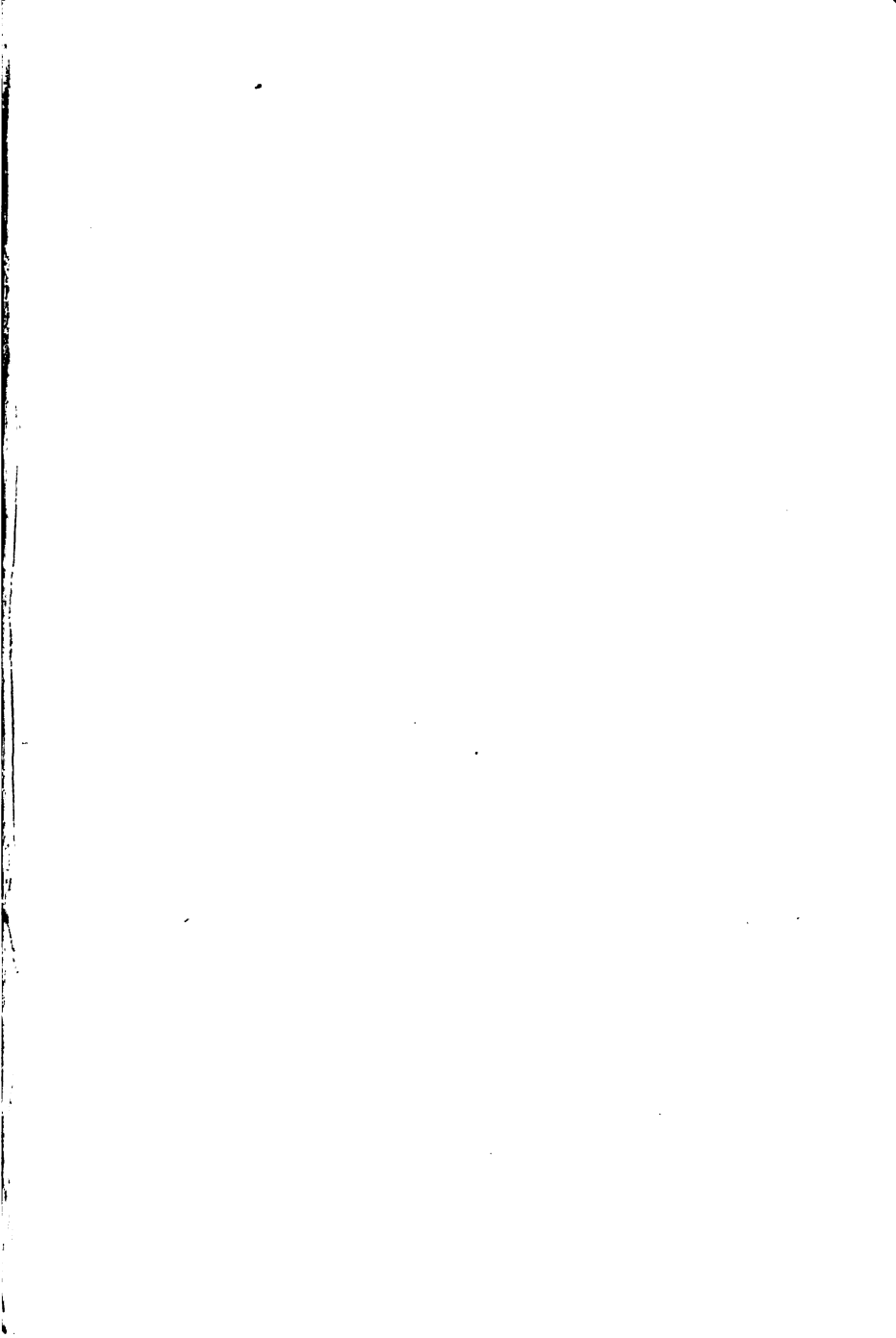
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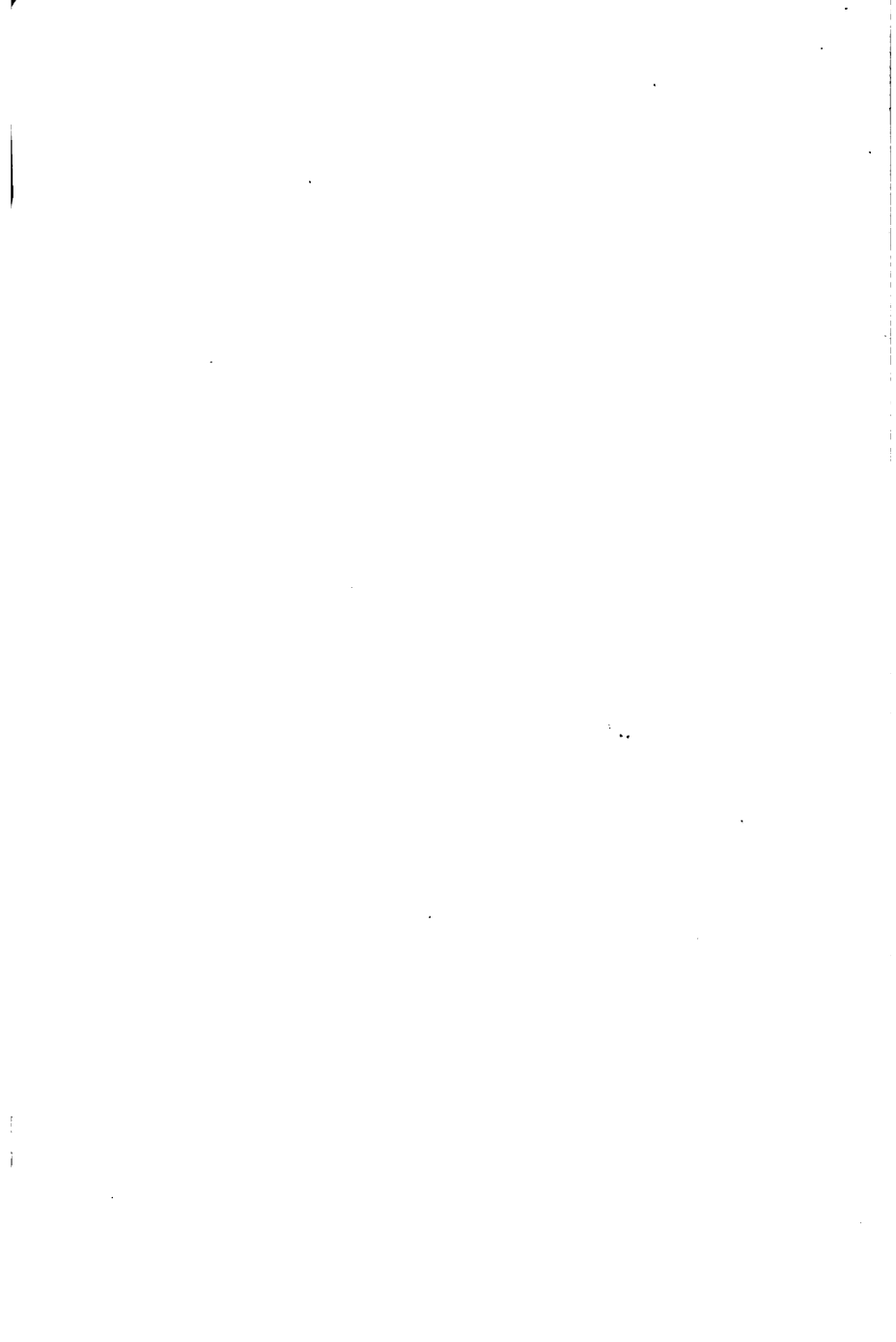


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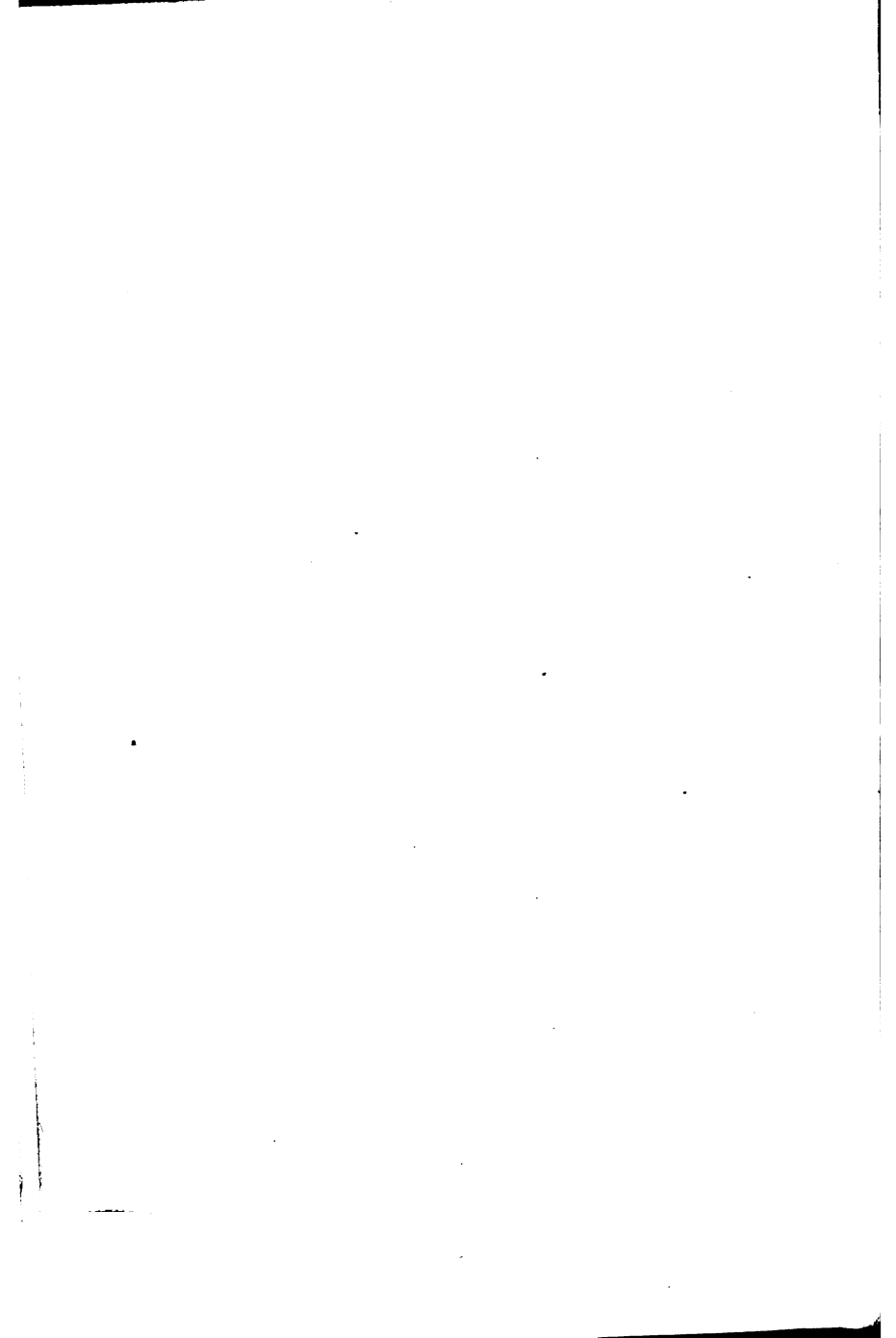
JACOB VOORSANGER MEMORIAL











# POOR PEOPLE

A Nobel

BY

I. K. FRIEDMAN

AUTHOR OF "THE LUCKY NUMBER"



UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

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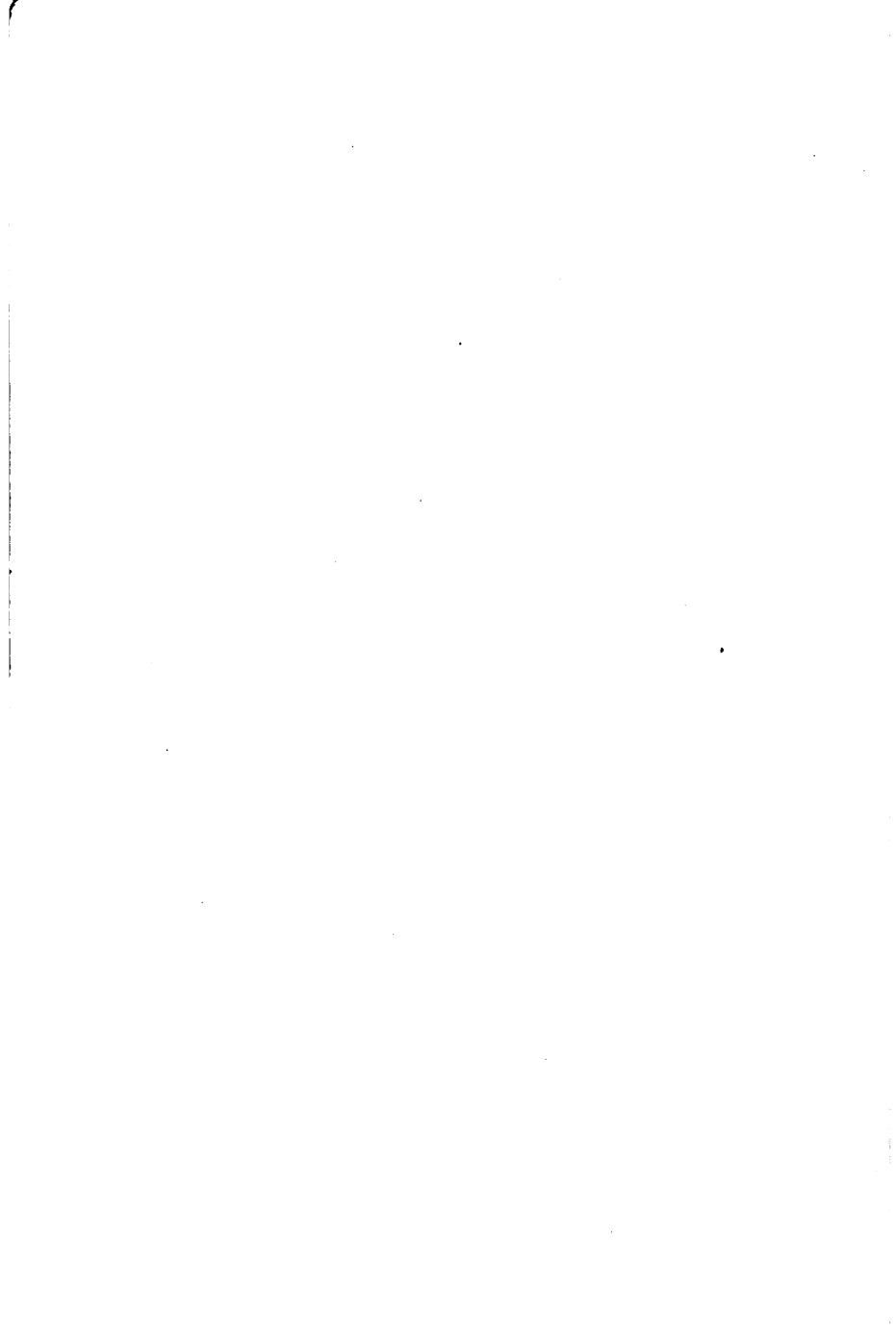
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TO VNU  
AIRBORNE

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## POOR PEOPLE

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### PROEM

It is an old tenement, drab, cheerless, and dreary; innumerable the rains and the winds that have beaten and browned its forlorn frame; endless the sordid tragedies that have strutted with buskined foot gloomily across its narrow stage; and the petty comedies of three generations have awakened hollow laughter in its grimy halls. Comic enough may seem those tragedies, and tragic enough those comedies now that the chief actors have turned to dust, and sock and buskin lie shapeless and indistinguishable in the all-enshrouding mould; useless the mocking mummery of mask and masqueraders alike; of little avail the smiling face the soul-sick jester wore; idle the care-furrowed brow feigned by the haughty mien laughing in the sombre sleeve of black, now that through the glass of eternity, wherein the true is determined from the false, the tenement reviews the passing pageantry of the past.

Nathless, the tenement still stands in sphinx-like solemnity, refusing to unriddle the enigma of existence to those who find life a burden; to the

poor and the lowly who seek nocturnal shelter in its halls, their strong shoulders aching, their feet bleeding from the carrying of heavy fardels up the thorn-besprent hill of poverty through the long day.

No celestial anodyne will the tenement pour from the vials of truth to ease the souls tormented by profitless pondering over the inequality of opportunity and the injustice of distribution. It welcomes us not with outstretched hands; impassive it remains to our goings and our comings; even as with countenance unchanging it heard the birth cry of our fathers and the death sob of their sires.

Over the entrance methinks I see, blazoned with the blood of broken hearts, the inscription, "Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here." Many the ways that lead hither, but through the narrow gateway of death leads the one path without. Laughter, loving us not, seeks lighter dispositions for permanent home; sorrow squats at the threshold snarling and snapping at misery, want, and woe, covetous of its coign.

Art battles here with poverty, and the struggle for survival is cruel, fierce, and terrible. The lonely student, exhausted from the toil and turmoil of trade, struggles with sleep for knowledge; the delicate flower of love tries again and again to sink its perishable rootlets in our unfavorable soil; the miser starves and dreams of fabulous fortune, feeding his hunger with the shadow of the substance it craves. Divers the aims here, different

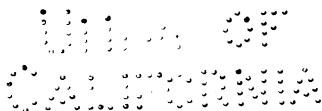
the ambitions as varied the peoples, but common ties bind them together ; down divergent paths roll their dreams, yet the end of their journey is one.

The voice of the tenement is "The Song of the Shirt." The sad monotone is never silent ; when the tears of the tenement are hushed the song will be stilled. The shuttles of the whirring machines move to its measure ; needle and thread whisper the lines as they fly their endless flight through cloth and linen, and the world-weary seamstress sighs its tristful tones. A tear congealed is the symbol of the sweaters' lives. Weeping is a luxury in which they may not indulge. Under the iron heels of the machines have they crushed out every emotion and passion, making themselves machines to work like machines. Beam and rafter and wall have learned the rueful rhymes by constant repetition, and in the dead of the night when the machines are covered — their restless sleep affrighted by the phantom of some pale sweater coming in the darkness to rob them of their rest — I can hear wall and beam and rafter moan the melancholy song from basement to garret ; the words come wailing down from above, and from below they sob their upward way.

Often have I thought of the tenement as a mine, dark, dank, and gloomy ; its walls and floors wet with the oozing of human tears ; its tortuous halls and small chambers countless winding dimly through the bowels of the earth. Here the sunlight never enters, and the purblind miner moils without faith, without hope, and without light.

Yet in the forbidding depths of the mine are hid glittering nuggets of pure gold, and to him who diggeth deep and diligently shall be given.

Angel of Charity and Mercy, descend with thy shining lamp, hold thy cheering light aloft and let its rays surround me, lest I grow faint of heart in the darkness and cease my labor before I have unearthed the gold which I seek; nay, lest I spurn the treasure my foot stands upon, and mine eyes know it not.



## CHAPTER I

### AN EVENING AT HOME

My slippers were on, my pipe was puffing peacefully, my elbows were leaning restfully on the table as I sat writing the score for the oboe and the flageolet of my opera, when a loud knock thumped at the door. I laid my pen down, fearful lest the melody running through my head had been knocked out of existence. No one ever comes at that hour (it was after eleven) except to borrow something, and no one ever wishes to borrow anything at that hour save Vogel, who is just overhead; and Mrs. Freytag, who is just underfoot. Mrs. Freytag comes for the toasting-irons; Vogel for a half dollar. I hoped that it was Mrs. Freytag — I always chose the lesser of two evils.

My wife had gone to bed, and my daughter Ida opened the door.

"Mr. Vogel wants to see you, father," came her soft voice.

"Herr Vogel, please," corrected the cabinet-maker. Vogel is as dignified when he requests assistance as if he were granting it.

"Let him come in," said I, knowing the quickest way to rid myself of Vogel is to get rid of my money. Besides, I must do Vogel justice, he al-



## 6. POOR PEOPLE

ways promises to pay me back; and so he would — if he kept his promises.

"Ach, Herr Vilson," he began, "could you oblige me a half dollar mit? I vas so sorry to drubble you, but I could no vork get dis veek, und mein sohn, Adolph, is also von vork out."

"And you will take the money and spend it for drink before another hour is over."

"Not dis dime, Mr. Vilson; I vill take Adolph mit me to buy coal und vood."

It was always the same answer to the same question. I gave him the money; I always do, for if I refuse he has but to go below and raise the loan from the carpenter, Rounds, who makes him pay it back by a day's work, thereby making two dollars on every half dollar he lends. Besides, he will drink any way — argument and pleading only make a difference in time, never in amount.

He rubs his hands, and bows with his small, stunted, thin body. Vogel looks as if the wind would blow him away if he would but give it a fair chance. His big broad head is too large for his thin neck, and generally leans towards his left shoulder. He has no eyebrows worth the mention, and his eyes are worthy of the finest brows in the world; so large and deep-set and blue are they.

"Ach, Mr. Vilson, you vas de grand musikant — de grand musician. You make de great operas vich de vorld vill come to see. Und you vill be great, your picture vill be in de paper, und I vill carry de paper mit, und" —

"Yes! yes! I know all about that," and I turn to my work again.

Herr Vogel showers compliments on my daughter Ida. "You vas like a rose your red scheeks mit. You vas schveet like de stars. I tells mein sohn Adolph often dat vas de jung lady vat I visch" —

Ida turns away. Herr Vogel, "washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water," leaves the room. My half dollar leaves with him. I turn to my "partitur" again.

"What night is this, Ida?"

"Friday, father."

Mrs. Freytag usually comes on Thursday; so I am safe to work for an hour without interruption by anything save sleepiness. I have written the air down for the oboe, whistling to myself as I score.

"That is beautiful, father."

"Eh, I thought you had gone to bed an hour ago."

"You know that I always wait for you."

"I suppose if I never went to bed you would n't."

"It's the other way — if I did n't stay up, you would never go to bed."

I continue to write the notes down as they pass whistling through my head. Ida has laid her novel aside — she uses her eyes all day and she must be sparing of them at night. I look up. She is always ready to speak when I look up.

"You don't like Mr. Rounds, do you?"

I shake my head decidedly.

"But Jane does."

Jane is my eldest daughter. Jane, Ida, and my wife comprise my family.

"Jane does!" I exclaim; "and since when has this gone on?"

"For a long while."

"But I never knew anything about it."

"If you took time to see all that is going on in this building, you would have precious little time to work on your opera."

"I don't note much else, that's a fact."

Ida smiles.

"I did n't mean to pun. I often think that I am a very selfish old man. I would have given the opera up long ago, if I did n't feel that the only hope of our family lay in it."

"There's not a selfish hair on your head," she affirms stoutly.

I rub my hand over my perfectly bald crown.

"You know what I mean," says she.

Ida is silent for a minute; I know that she is thinking of something serious to say. I wait patiently.

"Would you like Jane to marry Mr. Rounds?" she asks, her eyes resting ruefully on mine.

"Eh? Has it gone that far?"

"For all that I know. Jane seems to take it seriously enough."

"Well, Rounds is a hard-working man; and I guess as things run here he is well-to-do. He is sober and steady as a clock, and he goes to church every Sunday."

"But he is hard and mean. He takes awful advantage of poor Vogel's vice."

"Yes, but if I had been hard and mean, mother would n't have to slave her life away ; you would n't have to sew until your eyes get as red as a heated needle ; and Jane would n't have to stand on her feet all day at the department store ; and I should n't have to chase this will-o'-the-wisp of an opera every night after working hard all day."

"I would rather sew until my fingers ache than have you grow rich by being mean and hard and always on the lookout to take advantage of the weak and the childish."

"Bless you for that, Ida deary ; but does Jane feel the same way ? She seems dissatisfied with her lot. I heard her complain to her mother the other night."

"Yes, she would rather have you rich and mean than poor and kind, as you are."

"So you see, Ida, that I have no right to condemn her to lead a life of poverty when she has a fair chance to change it."

"But she does n't love him, and I could n't marry a man that I did n't love ; I could never bring myself to do it."

"I would n't have you otherwise, and I wish that Jane were like you, but she is n't. Jane is worldly, she can only be happy with money, and I have no right to force her to lead a life — well, a life like I have given your mother. Rounds is n't the man that I should choose, but he may make her a good home ; although he may be ever so hard and cruel."

"Would you want me to marry a bad man for a good home, father?"

"I am too poor to spare you for the richest man on earth."

"But you don't answer my question."

"I—I—I wish you to be happy, Ida," I falter; "God only knows how I yearn for your happiness."

"I know too," answers she.

I run my hands over her brown hair caressingly, drawing her head to my chest; there is a bit of moisture in my eye which I prefer that she should not see. I am a hero to my daughter if not to my valet; this is some consolation for not having a valet and—for not being a hero.

"Come, child, it's time to go to bed; it's a shame to stay up so late." I walk over to the front window to draw the shades and catch the bolts. Even those who dwell in the third story of a tenement feel that they are not too poor to have something worth the effort of somebody who is still poorer to steal.

Across the street is another tenement just like ours—the one building might constantly be mistaken for the other did not Malachy's saloon occupy its first floor and mark the difference.

Vogel is over at Malachy's, half maddened by the vile liquor. He dances about and screams like an ecstatic dervish. He harangues incoherently against an unjust social system that will not let a willing man work. Even if his harangue were coherent few could understand him; for at such

times he prefers his good German to his broken English. Then he runs whining into a corner and shrinks down, and sobs pitifully: "For God's sake, save me from my shadow. It wants to kill me; it wants to choke me to death; its hands are clutching my throat. Save me! save me!"

Later Malachy sends his bartender for Vogel's son, who is the one person in the world with the power to quiet the poor, tortured wretch. Adolph comes running over in his shirt-sleeves, an affrighted expression on his face, as if he had been called upon to look at a ghost from which he had barely escaped once. But the moment he enters the dram-shop and touches his father on the shoulder gently and says to him, "Vaterchen, Vaterchen," the inebriate throws his arm around his son's neck and bursts into maudlin tears and sobs: "Adolphchen, Adolphchen, nihm mich nach Haus." And with his father clinging to his neck, the son climbs up the weary flights that lead to their rooms.

Whilst I stood musing at the window, Ida went into the hall to make sure that the lamp had not been left burning. She came rushing back, looking distraught, trembling like a drop of water about to fall from the eaves of a roof.

"What's the matter," asked I. "Did the blacksmith on the second speak to you again?"

"No, no! Adolph just passed me in the hall carrying his drunken father up the stairs. He was speaking to him so tenderly, as if his father were a sick child; then he saw me and he looked so

ashamed and humiliated — I never saw anybody look like that. Poor young fellow, how I pity him!”

I soothed her as best I could. “It’s a terrible thing. What a load for a boy like that to carry. No wonder he always seems so depressed and unsociable. I have always felt sorry for Adolph; but whenever I try to speak to him, he looks at me as if to say, ‘Yes, my father is a drunkard and you know it. Sorry for me, aren’t you?’ And he answers me curtly, and goes on.”

“He is so ugly,” remarks Ida, her fright entirely gone; “he always looks as if he had been pressed between the covers of a heavy book, and all the life and energy squeezed out of him; but he really was beautiful for that moment.”

“As if he were expressing the noblest thought of the great book into which he had been pressed,” suggested I.

Ida smiles in assent.

Adolph carrying his father up the flights of tenement stairs is the abstract and brief chronicle of poverty trying to mount with the load of liquor on its back.

## CHAPTER II

### A DAY WITH THE VOGELS

ADOLPH VOGEL arises early. It is no hope of catching the worm which makes him the early bird. His frail body demands eight hours' sleep, but his over-active mind gives him but six. On a work-bench in the corner of the bare room, near the window, was a vise, a round glass case, and the ordinary kit of tools which the watchmaker uses. He skewered a glass to his eye and started on the repair of a watch that was large enough in truth to do duty for a clock. It belonged to Freytag, the butcher.

At seven he awoke his father. The old man rubbed his eyes bedazzlingly.

"Come, father," said he, "I am going to get breakfast now. Remember that you got a postal from Small yesterday to come down to-day."

A half hour later Vogel gathered his tools and was ready to start. "Adolphchen," he remarked in German (the pair always spoke in German when together), "I am glad that you called me. You are a good son. Small has a grand work for me to do; the carving of the biggest oak mantel in the city. You will see how grand I shall make it. When I am done Small will come up to me and say:



‘Vogel you are an artist, the first artist in the city — in the world. Those roses look as if they were painted by Michael Angelo. You should have been ’ ” —

“ You had better start now, father ; it is late,” and Adolph resumed his repairing impatiently. He had heard that vainglorious speech so many times that he knew it by heart.

The detached parts of the butcher’s watch lay under the “ shade,” and Adolph was at work in earnest when an unexpected noise attracted his attention and he turned around. There stood his father, breathing hard, an expression of fear staring from his face, his carpet-bag hanging limply in his hand.

The son’s look was one of inquiry rather than surprise. “ And what is it now ? ” he asked gently.

“ Adolphchen, Adolphchen, I would n’t go to work to-day, not for the world, not to carve a side-board for the kaiser. A black dog chased me in the street, and a minute afterwards I saw a black cat — the worst signs that there are. If I go to work to-day it means that I shall fall off a ladder and break my neck. Not for the world, not for the world.” Dejectedly the old man took his seat in the corner of the room, and buried his face in his long white hands. “ Ach, and that fine mantel — the largest in the city ! Why should the cat and dog not have waited a day ? Ach ! ”

Adolph was a wise son — he knew his father. He lost no time by arguing that such superstitions

were foolish and ill-grounded; and paying no attention to his elder's fruitless quarrel with the sable hue of fate's signs and portents he bent over his repairing. Adolph's only superstition was that he had no superstitions. The watchmaker heard a step on the stairs; he knew to whom it belonged. Undoubtedly Rounds the carpenter had seen Vogel return from work with a celerity greater than he had started.

With a loud knock Rounds entered. He was a good-looking man; short but well-built, and of a florid complexion. He dressed neatly and carefully like one who has concluded that dress is an aid to success in life; and Rounds's appearance and bearing were those of a man who has determined on success. He carried himself with the hauteur of a military man. His clothes were all made by Bernheim, who has rooms on the first back; and whenever Rounds made a purchase, there was such a "Jewing down" on the one side and such a "Christianing up" on the other that it seemed as if a bargain would never be struck.

"Morning," said the carpenter to the watchmaker. The watchmaker gave no response—he showed his respect for Rounds by preserving perfect silence whenever he spoke.

"Well, old man"—

"Herr Vogel, please."

"Well, Herr Vogel, I see that you're not at work this morning."

"What good eyes some people have—for a bargain," came from the watchmaker's bench.

The florid patches on Rounds's cheeks became redder; but he did not retort. If it could be avoided he preferred not to converse with this bitter young man.

"I would not vork for de vorld to-day, Meester Rounds. A black dog followed me, a black cat after. Dat is de same als to say dat if I vork I falls from a ladder off. Und I hav a job Small mit to make de greatest mantel in de city. Vat can I do? I tell mein sohn de cat und de dog dey should not come me against to-day. It vas always mein luck to get vork on de days ven I fore-varnings hav."

"It's a pity, Herr Vogel, that a great artist like you should be troubled by such things. Come, we'll go across the street and have a drink."

Adolph swung on his chair and stared at Rounds; then he said to his father: "You'll get half drunk at Malachy's, and go to work for this rascal; you'll surely fall off a ladder if you do."

Rounds's cheeks glowed. "See here, young man, if you have anything to say against me, I wish that you would say it in English."

"Unfortunately I can't express myself so well in English; I can translate it, though, if you want to hear no good of yourself. I object to my father working for you at the wages you pay — that's one of the things that I generally say in German when you are here. The other things — well, that's just where my English fails me."

He arose from his seat, and stood leaning against the bench; his hands in his pockets; his small

eyes glaring through his thick, heavy glasses ; over his swarthy cheeks something like color pushed its way.

"Adolphchen," pleaded his father softly, "hav no quarrel our neighbor mit. I vill be right back ; I go just for von drink."

"See here, young man, just to show you I don't bear a grudge, I'll let you mend my watch. I broke the mainspring yesterday. How much do you charge for cleaning, oiling, and repairing?" Rounds was ever ready to kill two birds with one stone, providing the wear and tear on the stone were no greater.

"I get seventy-five cents," replied Adolph.

"Well, Reismer down here gets but fifty."

"I knew that was coming. He can afford to work cheaper. He's a poorer workman. Besides, I don't want to do your work ; you'd be afraid that I stole a second from the dial."

The florid patches turned to flame. The way he counted time in his shop was a standing joke in the tenement. "You're altogether too independent for a poor man."

"It's only the rich who can't afford pride," retorted the little watchmaker.

Vogel went through the process of "washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water," fearful lest his son's sharp tongue cost him a drink in the end. "Adolphchen," he murmured pleadingly.

Vogel started towards the door, Rounds followed, pausing to say: "I'd like to have you

working for me a week ; I'd teach you a thing or two."

"Thank you, but I can't work for God and the devil at the same time."

So it always ended, Vogel going forth to be robbed and browbeaten and cozened by this avaricious tradesman ; Adolph remaining behind, the victor in so far as the crossing of words went, but always hopeless at his own helplessness.

"You see," explained Vogel to Rounds, on the way out, "de boy vas jung yet ; I always tell him to be höflich — vat you calls in English polite."

"You can't tell him that too often," snapped he, smarting still from the last retort.

"I vill tell him again, ven ve gets back."

They stepped into the saloon. The carpenter ordered a cigar for himself (which he did not smoke ; he put it in his pocket to kill another bird later on), and whisky for Vogel. The cabinet-maker would have preferred pure alcohol ; but the carpenter restrained him from indulging his preference.

"I tell you, Vogel," spake he, "you're an artist and no mistake. I often wonder how you can carve as you do. Roses and vines don't grow any better."

Vogel warmed up to the subject : "Vas it not so ? I often tells mein sohn vat great dings I do, but de boy vas jung yet ; he don't understand."

From his glass the old man let three drops fall on the floor. "Dat vill drive de schadows von de black dog und de cat away."

Even Rounds could not check the risible tension of his muscles. Vogel was quick to notice it.

"Vy you laugh? You dink dat I vas superstitious; but I vas not. I believe only in de fore-  
varning vat dings giv; dey vas signs."

Rounds gained his gravity. "That's what I believe in, Vogel."

"Vell, vas dat superstition?"

The carpenter shook his head; and Vogel, seemingly satisfied, went on with his own laudation, his praise becoming more and more extravagant with every glass. "Schmall calls me de Michael Angelo in vood; dink of dat, de Michael Angelo in vood!"

On and on went the fatuous, childish, foolish old man, mixing his German and English, proclaiming his greatness, tearing his hair; on and on until he became ecstatic and his eyes flared and opened as if they would take in the universe, becoming inspired by considering himself and his own greatness; weeping because the son, whom he loved, and the world could not see it.

"I vas Goethe, I vas Michael Angelo; I do mit vood vat dey do poetry und paint mit. I make you a picture, a poem in vood. See, giv me paper und a pen. You hav no pen? Vell, a pencil vill do. I hav dis dreamed a long time for."

Dexterously his trembling hand circled and squared on the paper; the carpenter watched and his eyes became as a miser's about to grasp the gold another is preparing to pay him.

"What's that, Vogel; what's that? Hush, not so loud, man; don't let Malachy hear."

He clutched the paper to tear the last design into shreds.

"Come, Vogel, do me the honor, let me keep it; just to show people that I am the friend of such a great artist."

"Vell, ven you vant; but dat vas nothings. I make you a schair vat de vorld hav never seen like. I vas de Martin, de Buhl von America. I show you dat I vas greater den dey."

And he went on and on, soaring to the dangerous heights of a semi-divine madness, drinking just enough to goad his intellect, essentially that of the poet and capable of inspiration, into a frenzy that was fine; where another drop would have pitched him headlong from the most towering point of his mounting fancy down to the floor in a drunken stupor. And the swifter and faster his wild intellect revolved the louder did he proclaim his own excellence, — the "I" dominating his disconnected conversation as his large head dominated his shriveled body; but his pencil moved with the velocity of his enraptured thought, never ceasing for the space of a second, swinging in graceful curves, uniting line and curve in combinations that were new, that dovetailed into each other so imperceptibly and naturally, never breaking into tangents, that the eye followed his drawings as easily as the foot goes up an oft traveled path.

And on and on, higher and higher, scaled his giddy intellect, leaving all earth behind it, and floating into the ether of perfect form; his stub of a pencil dropping the precious records of the in-

spired mind into the greedy hands of the carpenter ; tables, delicate as tapestry ; chairs in the like of which past generations never sat ; *bibelots* of furniture so delicate that one would have doubted the possibility of putting them into wood ; bedsteads, sideboards, mantels — the most prosaic of things running through the mint of his poesy and issuing with the stamp that would make them pass current wherever poetry is recognized.

Malachy leaned his fat arms, supporting his still fatter body, on the bar, yawning and running his eye over the lurid pictures of a criminological journal — he had heard drunkards talk before, and “a drunk” was “a drunk” to the discriminative judgment of Malachy. Rounds was all eyes and ears — one big eye and one big ear in very fact, with a grasping palm protuding between. Not a measurement, not a figure, not the name of a wood, not the most unimportant inlay or fretting or carving of all the million and one of such details that came dripping from the fringes of Vogel’s sweeping fancy escaped him.

A drink the more and the divinity of the man was extinct ; his eyes, so luminous and large that they seemed ready to burst into flame, became heavy and sodden as the sod itself, leering, sinking into a dull point. Exhausted, burnt out from the fire of his own brilliancy, as it were, his head sank on his breast in drunken stupor. The Circe-cup had transformed this chattering, silly old man into the dreamer of divine dreams, then into the beast. The beautiful inventions that had moved in stately



magnificence through his now besotted intellect withdrew as if ashamed to have visited a place so unseemly, and they passed out of his existence forever, not even remaining as a memory. He had put an enemy in his mouth to steal his brains ; and Rounds was the enriched receiver of the stolen goods.

Vogel, supported by Rounds, tottered across the street, up the stairs and into his room. Adolph was still at work ; he arose and eyed his father with an expression of despair that was more than pathetic as it wavered between pity and love. When his glance reverted to Rounds, his face became a black mask impossible to penetrate.

"See here, young fellow," spoke Rounds, "I want to show you that I can do the square thing. I treated the old man to the best, and I never had him do a single stroke of work." There was an ugly leer on the carpenter's face that might have meant almost anything.

Adolph moved an armless chair forward and said politely and quietly, "Sit down, Mr. Rounds ; I have a word to say to you."

Rounds was taken aback. He scarcely expected that Adolph would turn his left cheek so quickly.

"Now, Mr. Rounds, I look like a fool, but I am not half the fool I look. If you paid my father in drink, I am sensible enough to know that he paid you in kind. How he paid you I don't know ; maybe I will some time and maybe I won't ; but that isn't what I started out to tell you." His voice calm, not raising a semiquaver, he went on :

"I am a weak, puny man, and you would n't feel a blow of mine any more than the prick of a pin, or you know just as well as I'm telling it to you, that I would have struck you long ago, and struck hard."

Rounds started to speak, flecking a speck of dust from his coat with an air that plainly said, "What an atmosphere for a man of my quality!"

"One minute," interrupted Adolph; "what I started to say is this: If you ever come into this room again, if you ever take that dear, unfortunate father of mine over to Malachy's again — I — I — well, I won't be responsible for what I do. You understand. Now go!"

Rounds feared the moral strength of this weakling more than the physical strength of a giant, and because he stood in that nameless dread, he hated him. "I'll have my foot on this young viper's neck before I'm through with him," he muttered, going down the stairs.

Adolph locked the door; then he covered his father with a torn quilt, as a mother might cover a child that has tossed the bed-clothing aside in the restlessness of sleep. The mask fell from the ugly face, and his glance became inexpressibly tender as he put a wet cloth on the feverish brow. He felt the inclination to kneel on the carpetless floor and kiss the drunkard's hand.

It was not to his father that he would have knelt; it was not his father's hand that he kissed in thought; he bowed before the spirit of genius shackled by drink and poverty, and his kiss was pressed on the suffering it symbolized.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WRITER OF PLAYS

It was past three when Freytag called for his watch. Not wishing the butcher to see his father's shame, the watchmaker came into the hall with his patron's timepiece. Even in the darkness, the butcher noticed the sallowness of Adolph's complexion. Freytag attributed all troubles to a lack of proper nourishment, and in so far as the tenement was concerned Freytag was not a long way from right.

"Why don't you come and have a meal with us?" he asked. The good-hearted Freytag was fond of asking the hungry to his table. Adolph knew this, and that is why he never went, although the savory smell of the roast, floating from the kitchen into the hallway, tempted his pride, more times than one, to listen to his hunger.

"I have invited you often, but you never come."

The mask fell over the face just about to shine with gratitude, and he answered coldly enough, "I've been so busy, Mr. Freytag."

"I can't make that young man out," thought the butcher; "he's proud as a peacock and poor as a church mouse."

At dusk Adolph put his work to one side and

started out for supper, — the second meal of the day. At times he went without eating rather than cook his own food; happily Freytag, who always paid cash and gloried in it, had given him the means wherewith to indulge his nice taste.

He passed a florist's shop on the avenue, and the sight of the roses in the window seemed to recall something forgotten to his mind. "It's the eighteenth," he murmured; "I came nearly forgetting it." He purchased a rose, a carnation, a sprig of mignonette, and a few sprays of forget-me-not; two fronds of fern were thrown into the bargain.

It was seven and past when he returned into the squalor and depressing barrenness of his rooms. He lit the lamp, and wired the flowers to the corners of a frame that held the portrait of a middle-aged woman whose face showed more sweetness and gentleness than strength of character. The portrait was that of his dead mother; the eighteenth of the month of February was the anniversary of her birth. He adored the memory of the woman who had suffered much through his father's vice, who had had little or no pleasure in her life, but who had never complained. To never complain the son thought the highest of all human qualities.

He sat lost in reverie for a while, then he tossed his head as if all such reverie were useless, and he removed from under the bench a small stagelike arrangement on which stood a number of wooden marionettes. He moved the figures from one place to another, and stood them in every conceivable position. Finally the situation seemed to satisfy

him, for he left the puppets to note the result of their arrangement on a sheet of loose manuscript which he selected from the pile that lay on the bench in scattered confusion with his tools.

It must have been about this time that I said to my daughter: "Ida, I am going to pay a visit to that young man upstairs."

"Do, father," she answered; "I just heard him go up, and you are sure to find him."

So I started to perform the duty that I had long deferred.

"Ah, it's Mr. Wilson," said Adolph, holding the door half open, as if undecided whether or not to let me in. Despite himself, I determined to know that young man. For the first time in my life I left my timidness at home when I went out.

"I came to pay you a visit."

"Quite unusual for any one to even pay me that much;" and the door did not move an inch.

"I have been meaning to call on you for a long time," quoth I, "but I desired to visit all of my neighbors, and I began at the bottom and worked up."

"Taking in the aristocrats first," he ventured.  
✓ In a tenement the higher up you go, the lower you are from a social point of view.

He was anything but encouraging. I had half a mind to turn back; but the other half of my mind, which proved the stronger, insisted upon my going forward. "I live just below you—in more senses than one," I added with a faint smile.

"Well, come in; I'm glad to see you, to be sure,

but my father is asleep, and the room is in terrible disorder, and I've " —

"Oh, never mind that — I'm not a woman," and I stepped in before he had a chance to rescind.

"I believe you are a watchmaker," I began. There was a sign over the hall door, "Adolph Vogel, Watch Maker."

The mask did not fall from the face; on the contrary, it drew tighter. "I have been told by some of my customers that I am a watchmaker; others don't think so."

This young man actually makes me uncomfortable; I wish that I could make him talk and drop his mask. I noticed the pile of books and the manuscript; next, my eye caught the marionettes and the stage. I was determined to make him talk.

"Pardon me, I don't wish to be inquisitive, but do you mind telling me what you use that small theatre for?"

"Certainly not; I use it for a small theatre."

His hands slip down in the depths of his faded brown trousers; his chair is tipped back; his eyes glare through his thick, heavy glasses. I never had anybody look at me like that. His eyes bore through you like augers. If I have a soul he will certainly penetrate it.

"You will probably think me inquisitive; but then you know I am old, and all old people are inquisitive."

"I have always heard that old people are inquisitive, but I hope that it is n't so."

I haven't given it up yet. I shall make one more attempt. How those eyes keep boring, boring! I know what people mean now when they speak of looking through a stone. This fellow can see through a wall. How ugly he is and how dark! Such a thin neck and such a big head! One might think that when his head shakes his neck might break in two. I wonder if he crawled out of a handbox, a small narrow one with no breathing holes in the cover. Perhaps he would like to crawl back again. What high cheekbones and what thick lips! Nose Cæsarian. His body would be sport for a zephyr; his face defies all the winds of the seas. But I forget; I am expected to say something or leave.

"I am a writer myself—that is—in a way. I compose operas; not for a business, you know; but during my leisure."

"Is that so!"

I have touched the right chord; watch that mask drop!

"Yes, I am at work on an opera now—that is, the score of one. I have been busy over it for years."

"Well, I don't know overmuch about music. My tastes run in a different direction; I write plays."

"If you consider it rightly, there is a great resemblance between an opera and a play."

The large head shook on the thin neck. "I fail to see it."

"They are both hard to write," I went on; "it's

difficult to find a manager for either. Savages hold the opera and the drama in the same esteem. Bad operas and bad plays never bore those who never listen to either."

He smiled faintly; I believe that he has never laughed aloud in his whole life. "I have often heard you play on your flute; but of course I could no more judge from it that you were writing an opera than I could conclude that the Swedish family on the second was writing an operetta because they play on the accordion. How little do we know, after all, of what is going on below us."

"How little do we know of what is going on above us."

"One half of a tenement never knows how the other half is trying to live," he remarked.

"I presume," I hesitated, "that you dislike the mending of watches as much as I do the selling of sheet-music from behind my counter?"

"Yes, the drama is the only thing that I care anything about; but then, one must live. I used to be an actor after a fashion."

"And you dropped it for watchmaking?"

A slow shake of the head. The mask tightens, then it loosens a bit.

"No, I had a serious throat trouble; and the doctors made me give up my position."

I learned from him long afterwards—just as in the far future, when we grew firm friends, he related many of the incidents, and, taking me into his intimate confidence, disclosed the secrets of his inner life, which find their way in this story—



that it was liquor which reduced this reticent young man from the impersonating of character to the mending of watches ; and that the same evil has forced him to mend watches in the tenement instead of working regularly in a shop.

"Mr. Vogel, have you ever tried to dispose of any of your plays?"

"I have never ceased trying. The trouble is that my plays are too fond of me ; they will stay with some manager for the visit of a few weeks at most, then they come trotting home — post haste."

"Never allow yourself to grow discouraged."

"I have had that same advice before."

"But perhaps not from one who has had as much discouragement in life as I?"

"Yes, that does make a difference," he said, his voice growing softer, his face more kindly.

I am drawn to that young man somehow ; he would attract people did he not choose to arm himself with a non-magnetic shield.

There came that pause which we term awkward. I reached out for my hat.

"Don't hurry," said he ; "I am very glad to have you here ; it was kind of lonely this evening."

"If you were lonely I am happy that I came ; although I must confess," smiled I, "that if you did not shut the door in my face, you did not open it wide enough for my nose to poke inside."

He blushed — I suppose that one might call the faint color that fringed his dark cheeks a blush. "You see, Mr. Wilson, tenement people are so

poor that all most of them have is the affairs of other people."

"And you thought me that poor?"

"I did, and I beg pardon."

A small head pushed its way through the door. The head belongs to Mary, the eight-year old daughter of Finnehan the blacksmith, who runs the "Horse-Shoeing Parlor" a block away. I conjecture that the shop is styled thus euphoni-ously to make up for Finnehan's lack of parlor at home. At any rate, the family is particularly proud of the name.

"Pa's home," lisped the tot, whose face is at least five years older than she.

"And crazy drunk," whispers Adolph to me. "Come in, Mary," he called aloud.

The girl was disconcerted by my presence, and hiding her frowzy head in Adolph's lap, she lisped:—

"But he ith n't dwunk. I gueth I'll go down again."

One has no idea how precociously proud these little folk of the tenement are. I arose to go, trying to explain that I had outstayed my intentions. He accepted my invitation to call on us.

Through the halls resounded the cries of a beaten woman. Adolph shut the door that the child might not hear. I know that piteous cry, and I shut my ears to it ever lest my heart break from aching at what I am powerless to prevent.

"I am going to stop that," he declared, his voice unsteady, his puny fists clenched.

"He will kill you at a blow," I remonstrated.

"He will if his blow strikes me ; but it won't."

With uncertain step he hurried down the stairs. I could fairly distinguish his heavy breathing above the cries of the swung woman. I stood at our door, my heart beating against my ribs like a hammer on an anvil.

Finnehan's rooms were totally dark. The drunken blacksmith had a habit of flinging the lighted lamp at his wife's head, and she took good care to put the lamp out of the way at the hour when her husband generally made his appearance.

Adolph pushed the door open gently and entered on tiptoe.

"Who's there!" roared Finnehan, pushing his wife from him violently.

No answer.

"Who's there, I say," he roared again.

The great bully shuddered ; he stood in awe of incorporeal spirits, although the bulkiest of bodies with all the spirit in the world could not move him an inch. He feared only what his fists could not hurt. If his stubbly red hair could have stood on end, its ends would have outfretted the quills of the porcupine.

A sepulchral, hollow voice filled the room—Adolph had not acted the ghost in Hamlet for nothing. "I am the ghost of Patrick Doyle ; I bid thee not strike that woman again."

The door opened, Adolph glided out as noiselessly as he had come in.

"Light the lamp! Light the lamp!" whined a

cowered, nerveless mass of bone and muscle. The blacksmith's wife was as daunted as he; like a flickering shadow she moved about the room in search of a match. From her weak grasp the chimney fell to the floor, broken into pieces. The crash of the glass made the wretch purple to his very teeth. The wife fell in her husband's arms weeping and sobbing; he clung to her desperately.

I was still standing in the hall when Adolph pulled himself up the stairs, strongly resembling the ghost he had tried to represent.

"Well?" asked I.

"He will not beat his wife any more; not for a long time to come, at least." This was the only explanation he chose to vouchsafe.

Finnehan had murdered a man by the name of Doyle years ago; his plea of self-defense had proved valid, and on that ground he was acquitted; but the jury that sat in continual session on the murderer's conscience refused to declare the verdict of not guilty. From the blacksmith's daughter Adolph had heard time and again that when her father was most violent he feared Doyle's ghost most.

Rounds and Adolph were both students of human nature; they were both quick to see the Achilles heel in everybody's character; the carpenter pierced the heel for purposes of gain; the watchmaker was loath to touch it save for purposes of good.

## CHAPTER IV

### A LETTER TO THE DEAD

ADOLPH found Mary playing with the marionettes on the floor.

"So you came up here to sleep, little one?" and he patted the hollow cheek.

"Yeth," she babbled, without looking up from the figures which she was moving across the stage, "yeth, pa's dwunk, and ma senth me upthairs to sleep. Pa ith cwiss when he ith dwunk; he whips evwybody; he would whip a politheman, he would, when he ith dwunk. But ma thaith it ain't him, it ith the dwink. But I know it ith pa, I seen him. I wish he would n't dwink. Why do he dwink? Your pa dwinks too, don't he?"

He lifted the child on his knee, and tried to turn the runnel of conversation in a different direction. He had talked to his mother thus in his childhood; and Mary's every word brought painful recollections swarming to the surface of his memory.

"What were you playing with the theatre?"

She pointed to the figures. "I wath playing that thith wath pa, and that wath ma, and that one me; that one there wath you; them two wath polithemen. When pa hits ma, you and me wuns for

the polithemen, and they makths pa stop. But he won't, and the polithemen takes pa to the tha-thion."

Children in the tenement cry but little ; only too early in life do they learn the fruitlessness of tears. Like their elders, they have a way of suffering in silence that increases their suffering to agony because it may find no expression. Children in the tenement? There are no children in the tenement. The tenement crushes out childhood and leaves but men and babes ; between the two is a yawning gap into which the stunted bodies and precocious minds of the little men and the little women may enter for a second or two ; may know that this gap is called childhood, that the gap is a land of perfect happiness, free from all care and sorrow which is the common lot of their little manhood and womanhood ; but if their feet stray there for this second or two, poverty and misery and crime shake their Medusa heads forebodingly to warn them that there is a time for everything, and that the time of their childhood is past.

This thought may have struck Adolph ; for his heart was sad from the tearlessness of this child who was no child. He made a corner for her in his trundlebed, and in a few minutes she was fast asleep ; forgetful of a drunken father, careless of a brutalized mother.

At midnight he laid the manuscript of the play aside to write the following letter : —

**MY DEAREST MOTHER,** — One year has passed since I held written communion with your memory. I cherish no hope of these lines ever being read by your spirit ; contrary to that faith in which you believed and wished me to believe too, I hold that the dead are dead in body as well as in soul ; of them nothing remains but their memories, ever precious to the living. It is with the desire of keeping my fond memory of you ever fresh and green that I pen these lines each year on the return of this day. Your memory I regard as a flower that is tender and delicate ; and if the flower is to thrive and brighten my sad life with its beauty and its perfume, I needs must tend it with the same delicacy and tenderness of which the root and fibre are composed. This letter I consider as the water that gives the plant life ; nay, as a yearly changing of the soil to which the rootlets cling and whence they draw their nourishment. Mother mine, if I let the soil become exhausted, if I do not add to its vital elements, the plant will die, and the one flower in the bare and mean room of my existence will cease to make an attractive and luring spot whereon my eye, weary of the colorlessness of my habitation, may rest. My prayer is that the soil which I bring to that beloved bloom may become richer and better every year ; for the quicker the growth of the plant, the greater the exhaustion of the soil.

I have reckoned my growth and progress from the anniversary of your birth and not from that of my own ; I count my age from the hour of your

death rather than from the day of my birth ; for not until you passed away did life have its meaning for me and the sorrow of humanity its message. One day, perhaps, I shall be able to voice this message and the world may hearken unto it ; and I may help to make it the purpose of all to lighten the burden of each ; and the purpose of each to lighten the burden of all. If I fail you will know that I have tried ; if I succeed it will be because I have recorded the whispering of your words to my soul.

Twice during the past year have I broken the promise I gave to you on your deathbed ; twice have I let liquor make me gross as the beast of the fields ; but you alone can know how I struggled and fought and battled before I submitted. The taint has been in my blood since birth ; yet my will is strong, and before its persistent assaults, slowly, unwillingly, and step by step, does the enemy recede. The combat as well as the victory is dear to the hero ; and though the odds against him be great he will not turn back ; for his war is waged against principles and not numbers.

From you I learned long ago to bear all burdens in silence, to never complain ; and although my lot is one of poverty and deprivation, lonely, self-concentred, devoid of woman's sympathy and man's friendship, still I complain not ; for fate, like a wise parent, may believe that the sparing of the rod is the spoiling of the child. Here in this tenement there are many whose lives are fraught with greater hardship than mine ; if my intelligence is



greater than theirs I must suffer more ; for better gifts one must pay a greater penalty. What am I that I should be chosen from them ? Have I the right to demand more of life than it gave to you ?

Your fortitude, your gentleness, your sacrifice of self have not been in vain. They have been as stars that have shone through the dark night of my life. Without them my night would have been dark indeed and I should have stumbled into the pit that is worse than death. I have tried to shape my life to that fond precept of thine : " Live as if your life were to last forever, and yet as if death were to come at any minute.

I can truly say that this year has found me stronger and better in all senses of these words. Vale !

YOUR SON.

He held the paper over the flame of the lamp, and watched it burn to ashes in his hand. Then he blew out the light and lay beside the child on the trundlebed.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME MORE NEIGHBORS

VOGEL surprised himself, his son, and his employer by working at the large mantel for three long days with unremitting zeal ; but on the fourth morning, as he was combing his gray hair, of which he is especially proud, the bit of mirror dropped from his hand and fell on the floor. It was not broken ; it was cracked — which was far more portentous for Vogel. A cracked mirror is the most malevolent sign in his long category of the ominous and the terrible ; next to seeing his shadow in church it is the worst possible thing that can happen.

“That man Stein will finish the mantel,” grumbled Vogel. “I am not jealous, not a bit ; but what does he know about carving ? ‘Stein,’ said I to him once, ‘your roses look like elegant cabbages ;’ and Stein said that I was jealous. He should be proud of the compliment.”

So Vogel sat and bemoaned his fate and blamed everything and everybody ; he was waiting for the right moment to slip forth and console himself at Malachy’s ; it seemed to take the moment endless hours to come.

“Es kommt verickte Anna die Treppen hinauf,” he said to Adolph.

Enter Ann; exit Vogel.

Ann is what the tenement people term a "loose one;" that is, one ever on the move; but Ann scarcely deserves the appellation; she is ever threatening to move, and never does.

"I came to say good-by, Master Adolph," she spoke in her corrupt English and German, the broken pieces of her language glued together on a substratum of Swedish.

"You are going away, Ann?"

"Yes, I am going away from here; this is no place for a person like me; the daughter of one of the first Swedish families; and my father a general in the army."

She dropped her long canvas bag on the floor and extended both her hands to Adolph.

"Sit down a minute; it may be years before I see you again."

"I thank you, Master Adolph, but I have no time. I have not bid the others good-by yet. I always come here first, you know. You are a man of education, and you know how to appreciate a woman of fine family."

Ann is tall and gaunt; her eyes blue; her hair blonde as the sun, her cast of countenance betokening a mild melancholia. She is scrupulously clean; and her worn dresses evince an endless brushing and cleaning. She sews in her rooms all day and she scrubs through half the night. She seems in an eternal chase for a speck of dust that is ever eluding her vigilance.

"Where are you going, Ann?"

"I don't know, Master Adolph, but I want to go away from here. The doctor says my right lung is affected; now if it were my left lung I might stay; but the right lung—that is as bad as catarrh." The advertisements of quacks have inspired tenement people with a horror for catarrh.

"What doctor said that, Ann?"

"Dr. Jan Zwiefka, the shoemaker."

Adolph smiles; he knows the doctor and his theories.

"But you look well, Ann."

"And I feel well, Master Adolph; but it is time for me to move. To stay in one place too long is not good. I am so tired of the brown walls; and I know where I can get a room painted in the nicest red for the same price, and it has a window facing a court, too."

Ann Nielson's fit for moving is naught but a restless fever induced by the loneliness and monotony of her life. She works on like mad from sunrise until sundown, as if the loss of a stitch meant the loss of her life. Then the fever comes; and Ann's moving is a mere excuse for paying calls; her good-by a mere excuse for saying good-morning.

"Only think, Master Adolph," she went on, "I read in the papers last night that Hans's schooner, the Mary Collins, is coming home. I expected him last night, and I set a place for him at the table; and I quit work early to tidy things and have everything in place; but he did not come. Maybe the boat is delayed. When I hear the

wind at night I tremble and draw the covers over my head ; for I know that it is the terrible wind that keeps my Hans from me. Do you think that there is a storm on the lake now ? I forgot to look in the papers."

"Dear Ann," says Adolph, touching her worn hand, "you must be patient and wait ; and God will reward you by sending Hans home."

Ann's husband was lost on the lake in a fearful storm years ago ; it is her delusion that he will come back ; to take this delusion from Ann would be to rob her of all that is real in her life.

"I wish that God would hurry, Master Adolph."

He looks at her thin cheeks and thinner chest ; he remembers when the cheeks were full and the breast buxom. "God will send him soon, Ann ; perhaps before you expect."

"Thank you, Master Adolph, you always treat me politely. I wish you could have seen our home in Sweden. You always remind me of my father ; you have such fine manners. But I must be going now, I must."

"But we can't spare you, Ann ; you are the one fine lady in the building, and if you go away what will the rest of us do ?"

This comforts Ann ; she takes her seat again. "Yes, Master Adolph, it is a good thing to have a lady in the tenement ; it exerts such a refining influence."

Ann gazes about the room. "Master Adolph, how can a fine gentleman like you live in such a place ? You read in the printed books all day and

you forget. You must go out of the room and let me clean up, you must." She runs her knowing thumb over the bench. "Look at this dust."

Adolph protests; Ann insists.

Concluding that it may give the forlorn creature pleasure, he finally concedes the day. Ann disappears with her bag, and reappears with pail and soap and brush.

"Don't disturb the papers," is Adolph's final injunction.

After Adolph comes the deluge. ♫

Meanwhile Herr Vogel had gone in quest of Rounds and had failed to find him. A hope for credit was never quite extinct in Vogel; he had been born with the idea that credit should be free as air, and he was loath to give up his belief—it would have deranged all his economic theories. He walked over to Malachy's penniless but confident.

"Meester Mulachy (the washing of hands 'with invisible soap in imperceptible water'), I feels like de nichtengale dis morning. Vork do a man gut, eh? Ach, dat mantel; you should hav it seen."

"You have been at work, that's a fact, Vogel."

"Herr Vogel, please. At vork? I should say; look mine brow on, de schvet is der yet."

He rattled something in his pocket that sounded like money; the noise was produced by the jingling of sixpenny nails.

"How much I owe, Meester Mulachy? I like mein pill to pay. A pill vorries me de life out. I hate it. I go all de morning around mein pills to pay."

He jingled the nails again ; a little louder this time.

The saloon-keeper found Vogel's account in a small brown-covered book. "You owe me for five drinks and two cigars, Herr Vogel."

"Can it be possible? I doubt als it was more den dat. It bays to deal honest peeple mit. Vell, I hav von drink und a cigar mit."

He rattled the nails softly. Malachy poured out the liquor, and handed Vogel the cigar-box ; to have reversed the procedure would have been bad business on his part.

Vogel drank quickly and edged towards the door. Malachy's mouth spread the full length of his cheeks. "Ain't you going to pay?" he yelled.

Simulating both surprise and horror, Vogel turned his pockets inside out and dropped the nails on the floor. "I hav scheated meinself. . . . I was mein mind absent von ; und I hav put de nails in mein boket und left de money zu home."

Malachy threw a glass at the head of the bibulous rogue ; but the bibulous rogue dodged and slammed the door. Malachy sat down, and laughed until his fat sides ached ; nothing amused him like a practical joke. A man clever enough to cheat Malachy, according to the said Malachy, was the cleverest man in the world.

Vogel burned for another drink ; one was worse than none. The Polish shoemaker in the basement, Dr. Jan Zwiefka, would often pay his patients for taking his remedies. Vogel usually avoided the Pole ; he never went thither, but he

came forth suffering from some imaginary evil which Dr. Jan thrust upon him. Zwiefka has a method all his own of first talking a patient into a disease and then talking him out of it. This school of medicine differs from all others in that the doctor pays the patient; but Jan had a strong sense of the fitness of things.

Vogel found Jan at work on his bench. The Pole will drop a shoe for a patient at any time. He hates the mending of torn shoes; he loves to mend shattered health.

"Good-morning, Herr Vogel; how do you feel this morning?" asked Jan, dropping his hammer.

Vogel hesitated before answering; he knew not which horn of the dilemma to grasp; if he started by saying he was well, the doctor would prove to him in less than no time that he had never been so ill; if he started by saying that he was ill the doctor would prove him well, and then there would be little chance of securing his patient's fee for a drink.

He chose a middle course. "Vell, I hav been vorse und I hav been better."

"Kidney trouble, eh?"

Vogel turned pale; the Pole noticed his pallor.

"How pale you are; certainly you have kidney trouble. Look at the rings under your eyes. Let's see your tongue."

Vogel was unwilling to obey; if the doctor saw his tongue, it would never be the same to him again.

"Afraid to stick out your tongue, are you?"



Well, that's a symptom. Ah, there's a coating on it an inch thick! If you have n't kidney trouble in its worst form, then I'm a poorer doctor than I am a shoemaker, that's all."

Vogel did not see the logical escape from his disease. "Vat you do for him?" he inquired, even the red of his lips turned to white.

"The best thing is a lemon or two. Leave the lemons in your room until they turn black. Lemons, you see, have great absorbing powers; they draw the poisonous matter from you, take the disease themselves, and leave you well."

"But I hav no money mit me de lemons to buy. Could you oblige me a quarter mit until mein sohn comes home?"

"Ten cents' worth of lemons will cure all the kidney trouble in the world." The shoemaker drew a dime out of the small box under his bench.

Vogel immediately lost all faith in the efficacy of lemons; they did too much for too little money.

"I am afraid dat I am inflected heart trouble mit,"—the remedy ought to cost twice as much as the kidney remedy, the trouble being twice as vital.

"Eh, heart trouble? Perhaps you have. The heart and the kidneys are tied together like a horse and wagon."

Vogel's eyes brightened. "I always vas de friend von de Bolish peeple. De Boles and de Schermans, dey vas de best peeple in de vorld. Dey vas de only hard-vorking, honest peeple. Dey vas de only doctors vat I hav faith in, de

Boles und de Schermans. Could you oblige me a half dollar mit until mein sohn comes home? I would like me some tea to buy. Hot tea vas a great ding heart trouble for."

The dime slid back into the box. "You will have to get rid of the heart trouble before you take the kidney cure. The horse must be all right before the wagon can go. Hot tea is no good."

Vogel's eyes were glued to the box. He hoped an expensive medicine would be prescribed.

"What you want to do," Jan went on to say, "is to take short breaths — that saves the heart ever so much work."

"You von't let me hav de quarter den?"

Jan remained obdurate on the question of tea.

Vogel arose in a rage. "I hate de Bolish people. Dey vas de most descheitful people in de world. I vill be de friend von de Bolish people no more."

The cabinet-maker was consumed with thirst, and despair was added to the flame; he knew not where to turn. Adolph had his wage of the last three days; the rent would be due on the morrow; and to borrow a small part of his own money would be far more difficult than to get credit for another drink at Malachy's. Taking all into consideration, however, he decided to try his persuasive powers on Adolph. To his surprise he found his son gone, and the Swedish woman knee-deep in the ocean of suds and water. He rubbed his hands, and perched his diminutive body on one foot.

"Ach, it vas Mrs. Nielson ; always so industrious. I hav often said to mein sohn you vas de most fine voman in de vorld. Und you always look so jung und frisch, like a new rose in de sphring. Your scheeks vas like two lilies roses mixed mit. Any von could see dat you vas de daughter von a scheneral."

He drew nearer, smiling his sweetest. Ann swung her broom threateningly. "Don't you dare make love to me! I'll scream if you come any nearer!"

Vogel stood aghast. To have one's good intentions misunderstood is hard.

"I make luv? An old man like me to de daughter von a scheneral? Vy, I hav never von such a ding dought. Adolph has gone away mein money mit und I vished to know ob you could oblige me a quarter mit? I pay him back so soon Adolph comes."

Ann turned round and drew her money from the depths of her stocking where she kept it knotted in a handkerchief.

"Ach, you vill lend me it. I always vas de friend von de Schvedish peeple. De Schveds und de Schermans dey vas de best peeple in de vorld. Dey vas de only hard-vorking honest peeple."

"The smallest that I have is a half dollar," said Ann.

"I bring you de schange."

"No," she answered stoutly, "you promised me that the last time." She put the half dollar back into her handkerchief.

“Vat, you von’t let me hav him?”

She shook her head vigorously.

“I hate de Schvedish peeple; dey vas de most descheitful peeple in de vorld.”

It was past high noon when Ann, her task well done, unpinned her skirt and descended to her room. She will stay there until she gets ready to move again.

## CHAPTER VI

### IDA CALLS ON ADOLPH

ADOLPH is gradually growing less taciturn and distant; we met several times during the last fortnight, and each time he was more affable. To-day, however, he was as reticent and unapproachable as of old. He informed me that his father is quite ill, which no doubt accounts for his aloofness. Requesting mother to make one of her nourishing broths, I started upstairs to pay my respects to Vogel.

Mein Herr was fast asleep, and, although it was Sunday, the son was employing himself with his watches. I took my seat beside Adolph, quite interested in his work. I had not been seated very long before Ida made her appearance with the steaming bowl. She stood abashed when Adolph opened the door.

"Won't you come in?" asked Adolph. The invitation was neither warm nor pressing.

Ida stepped into the room, however; Adolph looked as if he would like to retract his request. The strange father and the odd son had set Ida's curiosity on tiptoe; the rigid reserve of the odd son had piqued an interest that is even more feminine than inquisitiveness. Most women conclude

that a man who is slow and unwilling to speak has much to say.

"I appreciate your thoughtfulness," he remarked coldly enough. He was not in the least constrained by her presence, acting like a man of the world rather than the recluse he was. He is very hard to gauge, is Adolph.

"I am sorry that I cannot take your thanks," blushed Ida; "the thoughtfulness is entirely due to father; I merely carried out his instructions."

"There is a great deal in carrying out an order in the spirit in which it is given," he said indifferently. His eyes went boring through his thick glasses as if searching the recesses of her mind and heart. "I have passed you so often that I feel as if I knew you," he said, as though he wished to show that he was not at loss for a word.

"I might say the same; but I never thought you took any notice of me." This coming from Ida surprised me.

"One may notice many things without seeming to."

"Why did n't you nod, then?" Ida had taken herself unawares and spoken without meaning to, as one will when flurried.

"A formal bow means so little; it means less than nothing," he answered dryly. His eyes went boring, boring through her again, evidently in search for the thought that had inspired the question.

I arose to go. "Don't hurry," he said. "I don't mind if you do," is what his tones implied.

Just then Vogel awoke. I was obliged to remain until he drank the broth. "You vill tell your wife," he repeated and repeated, "dat she vas an anschel heaven von, Mr. Vilson. Guth soup vas better als vein. I hav no love vein for. Vy men should verget demselves vein mit vas a buzzel to me. I hate it."

Half abstractedly Adolph lifted the "shade" off the works of a watch. Despite his mild protest, I took this as a signal for my departure. Vogel was clamorous for an extension of my visit.

"There, I can see you and not be in your way," and Ida sidled between the end of the bench and the window.

"Oh, you're not in the way," he assured her, with a trifle more warmth in his voice and manner. "I picked up the 'shade' without knowing why."

"Nervousness, perhaps," she suggested, with a little laugh.

"No, I'm never nervous; simply absence of mind. I did n't intend to work any more this morning."

"But I wish you would, just to oblige your visitor. I like to see a watchmaker at his work."

"Don't you think that I have to work hard enough without working just to gratify your curiosity?" he grumbled. I presume that he overheard his father's foolish chatter, and it annoyed him. Again I arose to go; but Vogel had reached the fifth impossible explanation of his illness, and he insisted upon retailing a hundred that I might at least believe one.

"You don't have to work half as hard as I do," answered Ida, partly in apology, partly in the way of retort.

"I did n't know that you worked ; I thought that you stayed at home."

"How did you know that?"

"I have seen your sister go away morning after morning, and return evening after evening, and I never see you."

"I do my work at home. I sew."

"Well, that's work, if you sew enough."

"I sew from morning until night."

"Hm ! I don't mind showing you a bit about my work ; but what's the use ; you would n't understand it?"

"Oh, yes I would ; just try me."

"Well, do you know what makes a watch go?"

"Winding it."

"But what does the winding do?"

"Tightens the spring."

"That's like saying a man moves because he walks. What does the tightening of the spring do?"

"That's what I want you to explain to me," she laughed. His curtness attracted her ; she was bound to overcome it. To understand him, she thought, was the same as comprehending the mechanism of the watch ; she needed but to get at the moving principle.

He explained the nature of the escapement to her, and went on to say : "There are always fifteen cogs to the escapement wheels of a watch ; but it



varies in a clock — there may be any number. If the cogs are n't equidistant to a hair's breadth all kinds of trouble result. Most watchmakers take this measure, we call it a millimetre measure, and try to gauge by that. But they make mistakes, and the least mistake makes the clock keep bad time. I invented this ; it's impossible to make mistakes with it." He showed her a long rod, resting on two upright bars, with a dial-plate at the end, expounding how the clock wheels when attached thereto must move in mathematical precision with the turning of the dial-plate.

"And you invented that," she exclaimed.

"It's hardly important enough to be called an invention ; it's merely a time saver. You grasp things quickly for a woman," he added patronizingly.

"You explain things clearly for a man," she replied in the same tone.

"Hm ! Is there anything else that I can explain to you ?"

"No, thank you ; I understand it perfectly."

"If you understand it so well, put this watch together."

She tried, with but poor success, and he smiled provokingly.

"You could hardly expect me to master it in one lesson."

"That's the last thing that I expected, heaven knows ; but then you were so positive that you could do it."

"I did n't say that I could put a watch to-

gether ; I said that I understood perfectly how it goes."

" You must n't get angry, miss."

" I am not angry, *mister*. But I insist that I did n't claim too much when I said that I understood a watch perfectly."

He smiled ; her provocation was pleasing. " But if you understood it perfectly, you could 'assemble' a watch as easily as I can add two and two."

He became more agreeable as she became more vexed. He enlightened her on the system of pulleys and bellows which regulates the cries of the cuckoo-clock ; he informed her about the more complicated machinery of the cathedral clock at Strasburg ; of the puppets that debouch at certain hours from the Frauenkirche clock at Nuremberg. It was all new to her, and she listened with an absorbing interest, as I should have liked to do if Vogel had given me half a chance.

The conversation about watches and clocks was beginning to lag when she gave it a fillip with : " Father tells me that you write plays."

" I 'm sorry that your father told you that," he frowned.

" Why ? "

" Well, most people here consider a man who writes plays in the nature of a museum curiosity."

" But I don't ; I think that they are the same as other men except that they write plays."

" Yes, that 's it ; they are the same as other men — except that they write plays."

"I think that you are twice as fortunate as most men."

"I could never find it out. What makes you say so?"

"Because you have two occupations."

"Well, it is a good thing to put to sea carrying a lifeboat with your vessel. Only my lifeboat is no good, and the vessel is worse, if anything."

"But you have another lifeboat besides; father told me that you used to be an actor."

I blushed to my ears. I certainly must get Ida away before she has an opportunity to divulge anything more that he confided to me.

"Hm! It seems to me that your father told you considerable about me. I never was an actor; I used to act; there is quite a difference."

Ida paid no attention to his taciturnity. She astonishes me; she is as relentless as a surgeon who has started with a probe.

"Did you like it?"

"Yes." His monosyllabic answer came with a snap.

"May I ask you how you happened to go on the stage?"

"You have already asked me, and in the same breath you request my permission to ask me?" His little eyes went boring from her head to her foot; then he said, like a witness compelled to testify on the stand: "My mother's brother was an actor in a German troupe, and I joined it when I was just old enough to trot across the stage with a

letter. Is there anything else you wish to know, miss?" He smiled with a mock politeness.

"Not just now," replied Ida quite tranquilly; "you have told me a great deal for a first visit."

I seized the advantage of the ensuing pause to hasten our departure.

## CHAPTER VII

### ADOLPH CALLS ON IDA

WHEN Ida called Adolph into our rooms to-night as he was passing down the stairs, I doubt if that young man was more startled than I.

"Did you call me?" he asked, his scrutinizing glance in search for an explanation of the unwonted procedure before she could vouchsafe it.

"Yes, I called you. Are you surprised at that?"

"Not yet. My surprise will depend upon what you want."

"I have been trying to take a clock apart" —

"And you had to call me to put it together? That does n't surprise me at all."

"You have guessed it; but anyway you might have said: 'I suppose there is very little for me to do. Perhaps a wheel or a spring or a little trifle like that.'"

"Hm! Let's see the clock."

She brought him the case, and a box containing the works, — a tangled mass of screws, springs, and wheels.

He shook his head doubtfully. "My first lesson was all thrown away; you should have done better than that."

"But almost a whole week has passed since I

had my first lesson, and I fear that I have forgotten more than I knew."

"That's impossible; you didn't know anything."

"But you said that I learned very quickly."

"I take it all back now."

She takes his scolding with considerable amusement, although she tries her best to appear displeased.

"I would like to see how much you can learn in one lesson. See here." She put some dress patterns on the top of the table. "Now I am going to show you how" —

"But that's a woman's work."

"I've seen a lot of men do it."

"It takes nine tailors to make one man. I never saw a manly man at that kind of work."

"So is watchmaking a man's work."

"It might be just as well, then, if you leave it alone," he said curtly. Nevertheless, he went for some tools, and he spent a full hour in putting the disjointed members together, giving a full and lucid commentary as he progressed.

When he had done she thanked him profusely.

"You needn't thank me. I didn't intend to do it for nothing. I shall take it out in sewing." His brusqueness captivated by its oddness.

"I might teach you how, and then you could learn to do your own sewing."

"Thank you; I don't care to learn. I can't reconcile myself to seeing a man with a needle in his hand."

"Sailors sew, and I'm sure that they are manly men."

"They sew in a manly fashion, altogether different from a woman."

"Perhaps you think less of me on account of the work I do?"

"No; on the contrary, I like to see a woman do womanly work."

"I was afraid that you might regard me as a curiosity," she remarked slyly.

"I thought that I was the only one in the tenement foolish enough to be beset with such a fear."

"You mustn't be so conceited; you will find that you are just like other people, when you get to know other people well enough."

"I suppose," he answered dryly, and thus remarking he took his leave.

The following night Ida tapped at his door.

"I brought this clock for you to mend. One of my customers gave it to me. She was going to send it out for repair, when I told her that I had a friend — that I knew somebody who did the work well and cheap; so she let me take it."

"Who told you that I do my work well and cheap?"

"I am sure that you do it well; and as to the cheapness — I guess that prices don't vary a great deal."

"The more is the pity. The idea of paying the best watchmaker the same wages as the poorest!"

"You might thank me before you find fault."

"I don't know as I should. I have all the work that I can do ; besides, I never asked you to solicit for me ; I could do that for myself, if there were any necessity for my doing so."

"Then I'll take it back," and, coloring, she turned to go.

He stretched out his hand to take the clock. "As long as you have gone to all that trouble on my account, why leave it here."

She held the clock tighter, her face showing the disappointment she felt. "You talk to me as if I had done wrong, and I thought that you would be pleased ; and you ought to be pleased ; not that it amounts to much in itself ; but then good intentions are always worth something."

"Yes, so they are. You must n't mind my gruffness ; it's just my way."

"I don't think that it is a very good way."

"I'm sure that it's not ; but then, it's my way."

"And no doubt that is all there is to be said about it."

"No, there's a great deal more to be said about it, but I fear it's getting tiresome to you ; so I won't say anything more about it now. I thank you very much. It was really very kind and considerate of you. Good-night." He took the clock and walked into the room.

His thoughts centred about her for some minutes after he tried to concentrate his attention on his manuscript ; he dismissed her from his



mind with a frown. Her face, smiling and serene, loomed forth in his vision again. He wondered at the persistency of the image, and fell to reflecting.

“Curious sort for this place; she seems to have some sense,” was his conclusion.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SONG OF THE SHIRT

WHEN Adolph came down last Saturday he brought his father with him. Herr Vogel began the evening with a serenade of compliments. A compliment is the price Herr Vogel pays for admission into every home. He extends it in payment for debts. He deems it good security for a loan; in short, he would have it serve every purpose of money, and a good many purposes that money will not serve. Most people in the tenement have discovered long ago that his coin is spurious.

Rounds entered just after the Vogels. He extended his hand to Adolph; Adolph extended his finger to Rounds.

The assembled guests begged me to play a part of my opera for them. I have a tender heart and I can never resist giving to beggars what I long to give away. I had played on my flute for but a few minutes to Jane's accompaniment when Vogel began to cry. Vogel with all his faults is really an artistic soul and fond of music and poetry; he has a bucket of tears ever ready to topple at the slightest warning. I have known him to cry like mad over one of Heine's lyrics; but as at such

times he was under the influence of liquor, I am inclined to think that his tears were induced by the effect of alcohol rather than the pathos of Heine. I fear that I cannot lay the flattering unction of his weeping to my music.

The grand finale of the third act is done ; Adolph whispers something to Ida. It concerns my music, because she seems grateful and smiles. Jane has left the piano and taken her seat beside Mr. Rounds. He is whispering to her ; it is not about the opera, or Jane would not blush and giggle.

If I were a young man, how much should I prefer Ida to Jane ; but, fortunately for fathers of large families, tastes differ. Jane is the prettier, she is the larger and more shapely ; her features are regular, and her hair is of a chestnut color that can be best defined as ravishing. Ida is decidedly of another type ; you must see all her features together, set in the round and demure frame of her delicate, old-fashioned face, to appreciate her beauty ; a detailed account, lineament by lineament, will give no adequate conception. How naturally would Ida take her place in the picture of an old-fashioned garden, teeming with the flowers our grandmothers loved, a lilac sunbonnet on her head, a watering-pot in her hand.

"Won't you recite something?" requests Jane of Adolph ; "father says you used to be an actor."

"So you used to be an actor," smirks Rounds. "When I was young and had my head full of nonsense, I wanted to go on the stage too."

"As a stage carpenter?" asks Adolph quietly.

"No, not as a stage carpenter," snaps Rounds, which is all he can snap.

"I vill someding recite," shouts Vogel. "'De Song von de Bell,' von de great Scherman poet, Schiller."

Before Adolph can prevent it, he is standing in the middle of the parlor, yelling at the top of his voice, tearing his hair and stamping. I regret to say that he has this long dramatic lyric entirely by heart, and that he never stops before he reaches the last word in the last line. He is deluded by the idea that he can imitate the sound of a ringing bell to perfection. I don't mind how, half so much as when, he recites it. His favorite hour for elocution is after midnight.

Jane and Rounds have slipped out of the room on tiptoe; Ida blushes in shame at her sister's lack of politeness; Adolph appears confused and ill at ease.

"He looks as if he crept out of a chimney," whispers Jane to Rounds in the hall. "He thinks that he gave you a very smart answer, but he ain't half so smart as he thinks he is. I like to see you and him together, it makes you show to such good advantage. Why don't you come down to the store to see me? That floor-walker, Simpson, thinks he can dress. My! a perfect fright. You can tell that he's a ten-dollar a week man a mile off. Pull down your tie; it's up just a wee bit too high. There, I'll fix it."

"I'd like to break his confounded neck," snarls Rounds.

"I would n't bother with him ; he's too far below you, dearie. My, I said 'dearie,' did n't I ? If ever I meant to !" She takes time to blush and then steams on again. "There's that girl behind the ribbon counter, just back of me ; she passed the remark the other day that she 'could be pretty, too, if she cared to use rouge.' I would n't give her the satisfaction of letting her know that I think of her — the hateful thing !" Trust the weakness of a woman to find out the weaknesses of man.

Vogel sits down at last, the perspiration streaming from him. In his excitement he has not noted the diminution of his audience. "Fine vas it not ? A grand ding ! De Schermans und de Amerikins vas de greatest poets in de vorld. Ven Schiller vas alive I vould send him a bell von vood made und carved vines mit ; und playing in de vines anschels should be. Und de last anschel he carry a rose vich I carve mein name on : 'Mit de compliments von Rudolph Vogel, de great carver, zu Friedrich von Schiller, de great poet.' I make him fine."

"Now it's your turn," says Ida to Adolph ; "surely you would n't let your father go away with all the honors ?"

"I am quite willing that my father should have all the honor he has won," he replies equivocally.

My wife and I enter our plea with that of Ida. Finally Adolph consents ; he recites "The Song of the Shirt." As he recited in his full deep voice, aquiver with emotion and feeling, I cannot tell you how he stirred us all. It thrilled me ; it car-

ried me away ; it sent the blood swirling through my veins ; it made my heart beat with the energy of youth.

All the agony of the poor and the downtrodden was voiced in those lines. Poor Ida ! “The Song of the Shirt” is the story of her life.

He is done. For a time we are too moved to speak. I break the silence with, —

“One must be old and hopeless, to appreciate those lines.”

“One must be young and have dreams, to appreciate those lines,” says he.

“One must be a mother and have daughters who stitch, stitch their lives away, to appreciate those lines,” says mother.

We glance at Ida. Her lips are compressed ; she says nothing. She would spare us the pain of hearing the phrasing of her thoughts.

“Vat I say,” exclaims Vogel triumphantly, “de Schermans und de Amerikins vas de greatest poets in de world !”

We find relief for our high-strung nerves in laughter.

“The man who wrote that must have known what poverty was ; he must have felt its sting and experienced its humiliation,” I ventured after the laughter had died away.

“Poverty exiled him and his family from their country,” Adolph informs us. “He said that ‘if the queen would give him a grant, he would accept for his coat of arms a heart pierced with a needle threaded with silver tears.’”

"Those verses should be sung in the sweatshop to the whir of the machines," said I.

"They should be sung to the march of the socialist," cried he.

"They should be choired to the music in the churches of the rich," suggested mother. I thought mother's suggestion the best.

Adolph draws his chair near to Ida's and whispers, "Forgive me. Had I stopped to reflect how intimately the poem is related with your life, believe me, I would never have recited it to-night."

"It's quite unlike you to ask forgiveness for anything. But there is nothing to forgive. I can't tell you how that poem touched me. It puts in words what I have felt a thousand times and been unable to express. I hope you will recite it again. I am anxious to learn it."

"I shall be glad to teach you."

"You are unusually obliging to-night."

"It's just my way."

"But it is n't always your way."

Perhaps because he took the reprimand in good part and without retort, she was prompted to say:

"You will be a great man some day."

"Hm! You say that merely because I have been unusually obliging."

"That's the reason why I tell you so; but it's not the reason why I think so. You put so much heart and feeling into those lines. You showed your real self to-night; just the opposite — no, not the opposite, but different than you have been trying to appear."

"How profoundly you have studied me."

"No, I found that all out without any study."

"Nevertheless, feeling and heart don't make a man great."

"But they help; besides, you have other qualities."

"It seems that you have made a great many discoveries lately. When did you find all this out?"

"I can't tell you just when I found it out; I have always thought so more or less. I am only a simple little girl who stays at home and sews, but I feel sometimes when I am talking to you as I do when I go to church, with the quiet, the great windows, the prayer and all."

"You take me by surprise. I never should have guessed all this from your manner. You took good care to cover your awe under a heavy cloak of pertness."

"We have both been acting a part, you know."

"I declare I have n't. I never act. I always speak out what I feel."

"Not always. Sometimes you speak to hide what you feel. Confess now, if I had n't been pert, to use your word, — I suppose it means the same as saucy, — you would n't have had a minute's time for me."

"I never considered patience one of my virtues."

"You dodge and turn on your tracks so quickly that I can't keep up with you."

"You remind me of the people who try to find deep allegories in the stories of the nurseries. You seem bound to twist me into a puzzle."



"No, you never were a puzzle to me; but you do try to conceal yourself."

"But I have nothing to conceal."

"Nothing but good."

"How glad I am that I recited 'The Song of the Shirt;' it makes you so unusually complimentary."

"I might have been so long ago if you had given me half a chance. I would have been so the first time I met you."

"You startle me. And why a compliment when we met first?"

"Father told me something; and I saw something. To be perfectly frank, since we have started to be so, I" —

"I never was otherwise. I regretted that I had been too frank at times."

"I am glad to hear you say that you regret it. But on account of those two things I made up my mind to know you."

He looked reflective.

"Well, are n't you curious? are n't you even going to ask me what they are?"

"I have been trying to think what you could have complimented me for."

"I shan't tell you; you're not half curious enough."

Of a sudden Vogel sounds the trumpet of his greatness most vociferously, compelling universal attention.

"Which of you girls," asks Adolph, after the trumpet has ceased its fanfaronade, "inherits your

father's talent for music? It is my turn for asking a question now."

"I have my father's taste; I love music dearly."

"Then you play well. Why did n't you play to-night?"

"I hardly play well enough."

"I don't believe that."

"Why not?"

"You talk as if you did n't believe it yourself."

"To be truthful — I suppose you think me very conceited — I used to think that I had talent. I was quite sure that I had talent when I stopped."

"Why did you stop, then?" His eyes go boring, boring through her. One must either tell the truth or remain silent when those eyes rest on one in that fashion.

"I did n't want father to find it out. I knew that he could n't afford to indulge it, and he would have been made unhappy by the thought that through fault of his my talent was going to seed."

"Perhaps you did yourself an injustice. He would have taught you himself."

"But in the mean time who would do my sewing? It requires hours and hours of practice, you know. Besides, there was nothing to tell me that I had talent — I merely thought so."

"So you have buried it?"

"Yes, I never touch the piano. When you read those two lines,

'Sewing at once with a double thread,  
A shroud as well as a shirt,'

it made my heart go pit-a-pat — so many of us sew with a double thread.”

“You have stitched your ambition away, have you, — sewing it in, bit by bit, with your work?”

She gives no response, that rather sad and demure expression crossing her face, which is her natural expression during quiescence. The young people deemed me too absorbed in Vogel to pay any heed to them. I overheard every word. I hate eavesdropping. It serves me right that I should have heard no good of myself. Dear, dear little Ida, how long does it take a father to know his daughter.

“I should like very much to hear one of your plays; you promised to read one to me. I imagine that they are very much like the poem you recited, full of love and sympathy for poor people.” She laid stress on the last two words, with an accent that was almost pathetic.

“Poor People! Poor People!” he exclaimed. “That’s the very title I need for my play. Yes, yes, Poor People! So you see that the simple girl who stays at home and sews has helped me after all.”

There was no need of speech; her face betokened the joy she felt at being able to help him in such a noble enterprise.

“You must come down some morning, when I am alone and sewing, to read your play to me.”

“Won’t it interfere with your work?”

“No, I work quickest when I forget that I am working. But I shan’t give you any opinions

of my own. It would be ridiculous for me to presume. I am entirely selfish in the request; I am only considering my own enjoyment."

"But you may help me. You have feeling and heart; I can tell that from your voice."

"You are paying me back in my own coin."

"It is the best coin in the world."

Vogel has been trying to telegraph his son a signal for departure; finally Adolph deciphers the message. He arises and clasps Ida's hand. I wonder if mother saw the glance that passed between them. It was one of those deep, yearning glances that express more than hours of talk. One should be very careful whom one invites to one's home. We generally lock our front doors after our daughters are gone.

Mother has retired. She kissed Ida good-night with no more than her usual affection. No, mother did not see that glance; blind are those who see, sometimes.

"Ida," remarked I, when we were alone, "how ugly that young man is."

"But what a beautiful voice he has, father."

"How small his eyes are, regular rabbit's eyes, I am sure."

"Yes, but how full of expression they are. Why, they talk."

"What a thin little body."

"What a great heart."

"Ida, dear, you are blushing, actually blushing. What did I say to make you blush?"

She presses her left cheek against my right one

in order that she can hide her face from me without appearing to do so ; but she cannot conceal the warm glow from me.

She saw him mount the stairs with his drunken father clinging to his neck ; I told her how he had cowed the brutal smith ; she heard him recite "The Song of the Shirt ;" I fear he has won her without wooing.

## CHAPTER IX

### WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE OUT

ADOLPH had touched a chord in Ida's heart that had lain slumbering and voiceless. The heart is a violin; its musical capabilities may remain unknown forever if a deft hand draw not the bow across its strings. The heart may rest dumb as a flute suspended; but let love breathe into it, and what melodies come pouring forth! The heart is a vase that may stand empty and dust-covered in a secluded nook; perchance Dan Cupid may stumble upon it and confide one of his roses to its keeping. The heart is — well, what a curious thing the human heart is, anyway.

Ida lay awake late that night. She had no more than closed her eyes when Jane came in; she touched her sister gently. Ida awoke.

"Just getting home?"

"Yes."

"Where were you?"

"Hush, Ida; I don't want the folks to hear; you'll wake them the first thing you know. We went to the theatre."

"You were rude to slip out when Herr Vogel was reciting."

"I had to go out or die from the giggles. Is n't he killing, though?"

"It was funny to hear him shout away in his German when we could n't understand him; but he is an old man, and we owe all old people a certain amount of respect."

"Stop preaching. You are a regular complaint office. You can go to sleep again if you are going to play head of the department. I did n't wake you up for that."

"Did you wake me up?"

"Yes, certainly."

"You usually do your best not to."

"I know, but to-night is different."

Ida sat upright. "I can guess. Give me three guesses?"

"Don't you dare; I'm going to tell you. I'm engaged! Whoop!" And Jane gave a scream and a jump, bounding into her sister's arms.

"I know who it is," Ida managed to bring out.

"Don't you dare guess. It's" —

"Rounds," shouted Ida.

"You're a mean thing. Kiss me again."

Despite separation in character and divergence in taste, the sisters had a genuine affection for each other. Jane sat on the edge of the bed with Ida's arm about her waist. Ida was naturally the weaker of the two, the more delicate, the more tender. She would have leaned on Jane for support and guidance had not a long and bitter experience taught her to stand alone. Hardship, necessity, pride, often form the inner and invisible stay of the most vacillating characters. The oak

and the ivy of the forest find their counterparts in the sustaining and the clinging qualities of the human soul.

"How did it happen?" Ida proceeded to ask.

"Why, it did n't happen; I just brought it about."

"What courage you have, Jane." She did have brazenness in plenitude.

"It did n't require any courage. It was just as easy as selling toilet goods and a good deal easier; it don't require half the brains. We went to the theatre, you know, after we slipped out. There was a loving couple in the play. Say, Ida, would n't you like to see a play once with the loving couple left out? Well, this loving couple was as moony as the new moon. Did it as if they were paid for it—about five a week, I guess. They were engaged about ten o'clock, when the curtain went down. On the way home I asked Will—I call him Will now—how he liked the couple. Then I asked him if all plays ought n't to end that way. I led up to it with a lot of tact, you see. Afterwards I asked him if it was n't a nice way to end an evening. A poser, was n't it? He hawed and hemmed a minute and said that he guessed that it was. No, he did n't say, 'this is rather sudden,' like the girl in the play. He half expected it; he has been for a long time."

Jane's shoes were off; her nightgown on; she blew the light out and popped into bed.

"Where was I? Oh, yes; if I had n't helped him propose I presume he would have done it



alone; but then I don't think it any more than right that a woman do her share. It concerns her just as much as the man. He can take care of me in style, too. What do you think he is going to do? He has started a factory for making new furniture. It's a great thing, so he says. Oh! he's business right up to the handle. If he gets rich, and he says he will, you'll see me drive up to the store in my carriage. I'll make the red-haired girl at the ribbon counter stare her eyes out. I can just hear her whisper to Miss Briggs at the glove counter, 'Rouge did it.' I'll buy my ribbons from her."

Ida was listening but indifferently well to this chatter; her mind was traveling afar.

"'Are these the best you have?' I'll ask. 'Yes, ma'm,' she'll answer. 'Well, I'll have two yards of the mauve. Have the cash girl hurry, please. Isn't it hard work to stand on your feet all day?' 'Yes, ma'm.' 'How slow that cash girl is, and I'm in a dreadful hurry. I might look at that cerise. Kindly postpone that talk with the young man. I'll have to speak to the floor-walker if you are not more attentive to the wants of your customers.' 'Yes, ma'm; sorry, ma'm. Cash! Cash!' I'll make them all know their place, I can tell you."

"Jane, do you really love Mr. Rounds?"

"You always ask sentimental questions. I have n't asked myself that yet. I can learn to love him, though. I would love any man that takes me away from that store; I'm tired to death

of it; you might just as well be a clock and be paid with a key for telling the time."

Jane yawned, and held her peace for a minute or two.

"Ida, you ought to go out more and get acquainted; you are becoming a regular window rose. I don't think that you ever gave yourself time to care for a man, have you? You'll go on sewing and sewing forever, if you don't keep your eyes open for a good chance. I knew that Rounds was an ambitious man and bound to get up the moment that I saw him."

"I do care for somebody, Jane."

"You do! Since when?"

"To-night."

"Since to-night! It came sudden, did n't it?"

"No, I have liked him for some time."

"Who can it be? It can't be" —

"Yes, it's Adolph."

"Adolph! That monkey!"

"Hush, Jane." She patted her sister's cheek gently.

"Excuse me, Ida; I did n't mean to hurt you, but how in the world can any woman like him?"

"How can any woman help it?"

"Easy enough. What's there to him? He's ugly as a chimney-sweep and poor as a church mouse on week days."

"Did you ever talk to him?"

"No, and I don't care to. I'd like to see any man get me with talk. No, ma'm, there has to be something else to him. I never dreamed of such

a thing. He's the last man that I would have thought of for you."

"He has a fine mind and the best of hearts."

"That may all be, but what good is it? Will it give you a home? Will it save you from sewing every day of your life until your back aches?"

"That's the last thing that I thought of; it never entered my mind."

"How foolish you are, Ida. How can you be that way? It's the first thing that I thought of."

"We look at things so differently, Jane."

"Of course, that's because you have had less experience in the world. But you will look at it the way that I do before long. Don't let yourself think of him and you will forget him soon enough."

"It is n't that serious. I like to think of him, and why should n't I?"

Jane laughed. "It will last a week; perhaps two."

"I don't think that I shall ever cease to like him and regard him highly."

"I've heard other girls talk that way."

"But other girls are n't me."

"No, but they are like you."

"But I never met any young man like Adolph. Those around here are altogether different; they act and talk so differently — just as if they came from a different race of beings. They are coarse and rough and without any education or refinement. I feel a shrinking sometimes when they touch my hand. But I like to talk to Adolph; I

learn so much from him. It sharpens my wits to be around him. I can argue and talk with him by the hour without getting tired."

"B-o-s-h," yawned Jane.

Sleep ended the discussion.

## CHAPTER X

### THE UNEMPLOYED

WHEN I reached home I opened the envelope that they had given me at the office. Besides my salary (I am ashamed to tell you how small it was) a little slip of paper dropped out which contained a few words to the effect that the firm of Marshall & Co. would no longer require my services. Here was brevity without any soul. I have always considered the best style the shortest distance between two points. The author drove to his meaning with a dash, without a single turn to right or left. If the same idea had been expanded to a book, the irony, the pathos, and the grim humor would have been lost on the reader.

My wife was standing by when I opened the envelope that sealed my fate.

"Thomas," asked Mathilda, "what is in that envelope?"

"Only money," answered I.

"But you looked so funny."

"But money is such a funny thing."

"But I could never see the funny side to it."

"People who live by their wits do."

"People who starve for lack of wit don't."

"That's because money has two sides to it. I

should like to present a design for coins to the government; on the reverse would be a man laughing, on the obverse would be a man crying. The man who has money shows the crying side to the man who has none, whilst he looks at the laughing side himself."

My wife smiled faintly. "It's the root of all evil, Thomas; so much is certain."

"Yes, but see what good things come from the tree!"

I sparred simply to gain time. The truth will have to be told, but there is no especial hurry — the truth is accustomed to being kept in waiting. It might be better to tell a falsehood. No, I shall tell the truth after supper. What right have I to make my family lose their appetite merely because I have lost my situation?

After dining we stepped into the parlor to play our evening's game of *pedro*. Without a word I handed my wife the slip. It told the whole story far better than I could.

"I knew what it contained before you showed it to me," she said, her dear face sadly sweet.

"How could you have known it, Mathilda?"

"By your whole demeanor."

Wisely did the Greek sage say, "Man, know thyself;" to know woman is impossible for man; equally impossible for woman to know herself, I might add.

"They are ingrates, after those long years of faithful service," she remarked after a long pause.

"And after you made all their money for them,"

subjoined Ida. If the firm thought my services as valuable as Ida did, I should have had an enormous salary.

"Do as little as you can and get as much as you can," was the reflection of Jane, "for they all want as much as they can get for as little as they can pay."

"Don't worry, dad," came from Ida again; "we can live on so little." What it is to be young and in love!

"I have two hundred dollars in the bank, and that will last easily until you find a situation. I have put something aside for a rainy day." Mathilda smiled — her smile, there is none like it under the sun.

"You must have expected a deluge, and a long one," remarked I, "and that is why you have thought your old dresses and bonnets good enough."

"And then there is the opera," suggested Ida; "you will have time to dispose of that now."

"I am going to get married within a week," put in Jane, "and a rich man ought to expect to do something to help his wife's poor family."

"Has n't any one a word of reproach or blame?" I asked. "Don't you think that I deserve some reprimand for dragging all of you into poverty and distress?"

Mathilda — "Nonsense."

Ida — "What an idea."

Jane — "B-o-s-h."

We played cards just as if it were a settled thing that I was to go to work on the morrow as

usual. I glanced up suddenly to peer at my wife's face. I caught her off guard. Alas! the drawn and drooping expression of her mouth showed but too plainly the worry she felt and was too brave to express. At my time in life it is no small matter to lose a small salary.

She caught my eyes resting on hers. "Thomas," she scolded, "you are n't paying any attention to the game."

What is a man to do with such a wife? And she is too old to reform.

Three whole days have passed since I lost my situation — the longest three days in my whole existence. Leisure is a blessed thing for those who are too busy to get it. The muse of music has quite deserted me; she seems to think that because I am no longer employed all day I am in no need of her consolation by night. I start towards the office mechanically, then I turn round and come home. Ida has tried to make me believe that I am of great assistance to her in that I can now take her work to the sweat-shop and bring her bundles back; but I know I am depriving her of a pleasure which broke the monotony of her toil.

I answered an advertisement to-day for a billing clerk. My letter must have been satisfactory, for they wrote me to call next day; but the moment the writer saw me he shook his head. I was too old; they wanted a young man. What will the world do when all young men grow old?

The other morning, unbeknown to my family, I



slipped the opera under my arm and started out in search of a manager — a duty that I have been postponing for years. Poverty is the dread enemy of timidity. I walked up to the theatre, then I continued my stroll. When I regained my courage I turned back. I repeated the operation three times. Had it not been for a sudden gust of bravery I might be strolling in the neighborhood of the theatre entrance yet. I told the young man in the box-office what my quest was. Smiling broadly, he told me to betake myself to the manager on the third floor, elevator. I wonder why he smiled? Wait until he reaches five and sixty and his clothes are shiny and shabby — maybe his diffidence will be laughable too.

I found the manager; not, however, before I had arranged my coat and dusted my hat in the hallway. A good appearance is everything in disposing of an opera. He was a man of some years, so I took heart and told him without much ado what I desired. He was gruff at first, but gradually he waxed friendly and sympathetic. It seems that an opera is n't of any momentary value unless it be written by a person of reputation, and that there are already too many in the market (just like clerks), and that it costs a fortune to produce them. A great deal of the knowledge which he imparted was quite new to me, and I told him so frankly, adding that had I been so informed I should not have troubled him. He smiled and remarked that he wished there were more people in the profession like me. So I put the "En-

chanted Island" under my arm and left the lion's den with the wisdom of a Daniel. Most people who paint managers at all paint them too black. I am sure that if they accepted all the plays and operas submitted to them they would enjoy a universal popularity. Indeed who would be left to hate?

When I returned to my home I tried to hide the manuscript under my coat in such a manner that Mathilda could n't see it. Unfortunately, as I was on the point of slipping the heavy roll into the drawer of the closet, I let the thing drop from my hand on the floor. I blushed confusedly.

"Thomas," said Mathilda, "I fear that you are growing awkward; you never used to make such a noise in putting your coat away."

Dear soul, she does n't think I know that she knows; but it is very difficult for an old wife to fool an old husband. At lunch she and Ida had much to say on the discouragement which all the great musicians had to undergo. She preached quite a delicate little sermon on the text of perseverance. My wife grows better with age; I can see an improvement each day; how I hate to think of the time of her absolute perfection.

I have started to address envelopes at the rate of seventy-five cents the thousand; but my hand has lost its cunning and moves slowly, and my penmanship is not of the most legible. It cost two days' labor to finish the first ten hundred. The contractor paid me for my work; but in the kindest manner he refused to assign me a second

lot. I am not of good address, I fear. To be old, to be useless, to be poor — this is the trilogy of misfortune.

This is the first day of a new week; I have turned over a new leaf. I have turned over the same leaf so often on the first day of the year, the first day of the month, and the first day of the week, that I am afraid the leaf will become as wrinkled and dry as myself, and crumble. How many times have I not resolved to stop smoking, but this time I am determined to give it up. After thinking it over for the last three hours (Oh, how I miss my pipe!), I have reached the conclusion that smoking is an unnecessary habit; this very minute I have decided that it is quite as unnecessary as sleeping or eating. My last pipeful of tobacco was smoked yesterday, and I can't bear the idea of using mother's money to purchase luxuries when we may need the necessaries in a short time.

"Thomas," said Mathilda, apparently lost in reflection, "I miss something this morning and I don't know what it is."

I was about to say that I missed something and I knew what it was, but instead I put the question, "What in the world can it be?"

"I know now," she ejaculated suddenly; "it's the smell of tobacco. Why, you have n't smoked this morning."

"Indeed," quoth I, affecting surprise, "I thought you missed your usual whirl through the park in your victoria."

She fastened her eyes on me searchingly. "Come now, Thomas, why are n't you smoking?"

"You wished me to give it up when we were first married, and I have been delaying it long enough; if I put it off longer you may judge me inconsiderate."

"Is there no other reason?"

"Yes, it hurt my health. I have n't slept so well of late. I threw all the tobacco away that I had last night, and I will never smoke again. I am old enough to exert my will power, and I mean to do it."

She evidently believed me very serious in my intention, for she helped me put temptation out of reach by bringing a large package of the weed home from the market. She handed it to me with, "A reward for the speedy execution of my wishes."

She happened to hit a good mixture, I must admit, although it was a little pungent. Several times, when I stopped to reflect, it drew the tears to my eyes; after all, the fault may have been with my eyes.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FORTUNE-TELLER

ON the fourth floor there is a suite of two rooms facing the street; from the window hangs a sign, "Madame Van Meer, Fortune-Teller." Poverty-stricken neighborhoods always abound with tellers of fortune. It is one of the ways the poor have of getting rich.

The madame is a short, fat, coarse-featured woman who, when she is visible at all, is seen in a greasy wrapper. She has a parrot and three black cats. She is the kind of woman who goes with a parrot.

Vogel's faith in the madame began from the day when he discovered that she had the hardihood to live with black cats, and that she was seemingly impervious to the malevolence which usually follows in the wake of black felines. He was her most frequent caller and her worst customer. He invariably tried to have his fortune told for nothing. He was in her debt for a borrowed dollar and the telling of five fortunes. He had paid the dollar back in promises a thousand times; he declared his willingness to pay for the five fortunes in hard cash so soon as one of them should materialize.

For a long time Vogel had given the madame a wide berth; she had threatened to visit him with the ten plagues the last time he had paid her a professional visit. Life was already teeming with plagues for poor Vogel, and he had no desire to tempt the misfortune teller. A month had already passed without his having had the slightest knowledge as to what his fate for the following months would be. Vogel is constantly on the lookout for the unexpected which never happens. Now came a long series of forewarnings—he went to Madame Van Meer to be forearmed.

The madame sat talking to her parrot in Dutch; the three black cats were frisking about her feet and pulling at the end of her bedraggled wrapper. Vogel perched himself on one foot, rubbed his hands, and opened the attack with a volley of flattery.

“You look like a rose your wrapper in. You vas de von voman in de building taste und refinement von.”

“Come, come, Herr Vogel, you have told me that before.”

The madame had been susceptible to his flattery only too often. She resolved to be mail-clad against it this time.

“Vell, should I not tell de truth? Ven you look like a rose vas it mein fault? I have often told mein sohn—ven you don’t believe it you vill him ask—your birds und cats mit you remind me de picture vat I hav seen de queen von England von.”

"I hate the queen of England!" stormed the woman.

"So I hate her. She vas ugly und fat."

"But you said that I looked like her?"

"Eh," queried Vogel, much nonplused. "I say dat de bird und de cats remind me de queen von."

"That's no compliment to me."

"I never bay compliments; I hate it. You vill tell me mein fortune dis morning, vas it not?"

"Did you bring me the money you owe me?"

"I have it mit."

He held a silver dollar and a half dollar in his hand. Her eyes glittered; this was just a dollar and a half more than she had ever seen in Vogel's hand before.

"Sit down." She took a deck of cards from the table.

"You vill send de black cats in de next room, vill you not?"

She arose from her seat, opened the door, and the cats defiled from Vogel's presence.

She shuffled the worn deck, cut it with her left hand, and turning the cards up by threes, discarding all but the triplets of the same suit, she finally appropriated fifteen cards. In ominous, triune rows there lay before her queens, knaves, aces, spades, diamonds, and hearts.

Vogel made an effort to tempt fortune before it should be too late. "You vill make it gut, eh? I alvays vas de friend von de Danish peepel. De Danes und de Schermans vas de only two honest, hard-vorking peepel vat der vas."

"I hate the Danes ; I 'm Dutch," exclaimed the reader of the fates.

"I mean de Dutch, of course de Dutch. De Danes vas a descheitful peeple."

She began to count seven cards from right to left. "Seven," cried the madame, "and I stop at the ace of spades. Seven again, and I stop at the king of spades—that signifies a shadow in a church. Seven once more and for the last. I stop at the knave of spades ; I see a dark form coming to you in the church ; it hangs over your shadow on the right wall of the church. The form and the shadow are struggling. See ! the form has swallowed the shadow. You will die." She had learned all this from Vogel's lips ; cards have as little to do with fortune-telling as the future itself.

Vogel grew pale and insisted that the cards were wrong ; she persisted that the cards were right. He had come thither to be hocus-pocused out of the bugbear of his existence, not to pay for being cheated into a firmer belief therein.

"You hav a mestake made !"

"I know my business, I guess," proclaimed the prophetess hotly.

His blue eyes waxed green, his pale face flushed scarlet. "You hav scheated de cards mit, I vill not bay."

"You won't pay me ?" She lifted herself from her seat in all the majesty of her two hundred pounds avoirdupois, odd.

"Für vat ? I knows so much meinsel. De



fortune-teller must tell me vat I don't know ; to tell me vat I knows, dat vas not fortune-telling."

"I'm not an Egyptian sorceress ; I'm only a fortune-teller ; I can't charm the cards." She was so astonished at her client's audacity that she had scarcely breath left wherewith to speak.

"Den I goes to see an Esjyptian. I know von. She vas a friend von mine, she vill scharm de cards."

The madame's cheeks became mottled as the parrot's plumage. "They are a pack of frauds and quacks. No one can charm the cards ; if any one could do it, I could. Your fortune is told by the cards, and all we can do is to read it."

"But der vas a grand mestake, you hav played de cards mit."

"I never juggle with the cards ; that's unprofessional."

"I dink de cards a mestake hav made. You vill try dem again, eh ?"

The augur became perplexed. If she remained firm in her first forecast, she was in danger of losing the wage due her for past as well as for present services ; if she vacillated, she would endanger her reputation for infallibility. She chose the former course ; the latter might cost her fee as well as her reputation. She dealt the cards again and hurried through the same process.

"Don't you see that I'm right ?" she shouted with conviction. "There's the church ; there's the shadow — a long black shadow on the right

wall, and there 's the shadow being swallowed by the form — which is death ! ”

He plucked his gray hair nervously, his eyes glued to the cards. “Vat I say,” he exclaimed triumphantly, “I be not dead ! De knave von spades vas not de place in vat it vas before. De first dime it vas de ace von hearts next.”

She picked up the designated card and tossed it to one side disdainfully.

“That card is unimportant ; it does n't count anyway.” Here was another game at which two could evidently play.

Vogel became wroth and lost his temper. “De Dutch vas a descheitful peeple. I vill be de friend von de Dutch race no more.”

Her heavy foot stamped on the floor. “You talk as if you were the Kaiser of Germany. The Dutch race can get along without your friendship, I guess. You pay me and get out of here ! ”

“I vill not bay ; de cards vas no gut ; you hav scharmed dem.”

“I will have you arrested, you old scamp,” she shrieked.

“You call me a schgamp ; me, de great carver, de Michael Angelo in vood ? You old, fat, ugly veed. You sit your dirty wrapper in like — like a schimney covered schmoke mit.”

This swift change of simile, this degradation from a rose to a weed and then to a smoke-wreathed chimney, left her speechless. She jerked at the cords of the cotton window shade and the sunlight came streaming into the room. The par-

rot shrieked in Dutch. The cats debouched from the other room and ran about Vogel's feet, making him the centre of a circle the circumference of which was a heavy black line.

"I curse you in the name of the seventh daughter of the seventh son, whose curse shall last forever and ever." She raised her hands dramatically.

Vogel's color became that of the whitewashed wall; his body seemed to shrink into the floor; his knees quaked; his hands were clasped as if in prayer. The black cats purred about him unnoticed; the curse of the seventh daughter passed unheard; his eyes were fastened upon his shadow, which stood in silhouette-like relief on the blank wall.

"If you don't pay me what is due me," threatened the woman in the most impressive voice she could command, "I will order the shadow to flit after you until the end. It will follow you when you are awake, and will stand over your bed when you are asleep. I am fat! I am a chimney! I cheat at cards! I am a weed, am I?"

Vogel's teeth chattered; he maundered some words that were as indistinct as the babble of a babe. He felt in his pocket mechanically, dropped his dollar and a half on the floor, and ran from the room.

In the hallway he cursed and howled in a manner that the seventh son might have envied; but at that particular moment the seventh daughter

envied nobody; she lay back in her chair smothered with laughter, patting her cats affectionately with her left hand, jingling the silver with her right, and blinking at the parrot, which was translating Vogel's German curses into Dutch.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CONFESSION

ADOLPH was reflecting over the result of two experiments that he had just made in analysis and vivisection. His heart and mind had been the material for both of his pseudo-scientific investigations. The results brought him no certitude in any way commensurate with the expenditure of work and the pangs of thought. He was as well satisfied now with the conclusions derived concerning his love for Ida (no, it was not love ; it was simply affection) as before the painful operations had been undertaken. The best thing to do, he resolved, was to cease his visits and drop her acquaintance for a time ; in the interim he would be able to decide if this affection were merely a whim, or whether it rested on a basis that was firm.

A tap at the door put an end to all morbid introspection. "Ida," he said to himself ; and covering his face with a mask, he opened the door.

"Well ?"

"You don't seem a bit pleased to see me."

"I'm delighted."

"No, you're not ; you don't look it."

"I'm frightfully busy."

"You ought never to be too busy to see me for a few minutes."

"I never am. Won't you come in?"

"No, not on such a cold invitation. When I extend an invitation to any one I do it as if I meant it, as if I were sincere, and not just trying to be polite. I do it like this; listen carefully, and then you'll know next time: I am going out to take my work to the shop. Will you walk with me? I wish you to very much. I am just dying to have you. Won't you come?"

"Thanks for the lesson; I learned a heap. But I can't go. I have too much to do," he grumbled.

"I see that you have one of your pleasant moods again. I'm off — good-by."

She bounded along the short hall that led to the stairs. He stood undecided. His indecision was of short duration. "Wait a minute," he bawled after her, "I'll come."

Her merry laugh pealed upward. "I've a mind not to wait," was her reply, as she stood waiting.

"Knows me like a book," he muttered, grabbing his felt hat and joining her. Together they wended their way into the street.

"Let me carry your bundle."

"Have n't you more than your share to carry as it is?"

"They have n't laid the last straw on yet."

"But you have n't a camel's back."

"No, but it is fast becoming one; if I stay stooped so much, I shall have a hump before long."

"You have actually been working hard, then?"

"Actually."

"At the play?"

"Yes."

"I have a sort of godmother-like interest in the play, you know; I named it. And still you have n't brought it down to show it to me yet."

"I started to twice."

"Well, why did n't you do it? Sometimes I think you are very timid, and sometimes I think that you are n't timid at all. Which are you?"

"I hardly know. I have thought just that myself."

"You can forget anybody when you are at work, I think."

"I thought of you, though." He paused a second as if to gain counsel, and then fairly forced himself to add, "More often than I desired."

She flushed slightly. "I ought to feel flattered; that's such an admission for you to make. I wonder how you came to do it."

"So do I. Are you pleased?"

"I am not exactly displeased."

"What an admission for you to make!"

They had reached her destination. She hastened up the stairs of a red brick house, over the second floor of which hung the sign: "I. Liberman & Co., Manufacturers of Knee Pants." The lights were still burning in what was intended for a parlor, and Adolph could descry some ten or twelve girls bent over sewing-machines.

Ida came back in a few minutes, bearing a bundle of the same size as the one she had carried thither. "I never go in there now but I think of 'The Song of the Shirt,' and I never leave there without an

aching heart. And how little they get for their work! It does n't deserve the name of pay; it's pittance. It is n't fair; it is n't right; it is n't just! Yet I don't think that Liberman is to blame. He seems to be a good-hearted man, and I am sure that he gives us as much as he can; but he does n't get anything himself. He sells his stuff to the dealers, and they give him precious little, and sell at a small profit themselves, and so it goes the whole way. I think it would be better if the people would pay more, if the dealer could sell at a better profit, and we could get something like honest pay for killing work."

"It would be better, but competition don't allow that; then there are always so many workers struggling for the same position that you might be paid no higher even if the dealer sold for more. It is the meanest man anyway that dictates the price of goods; he grinds his help to death, sells cheaper by using meaner methods, and if his competitors don't follow suit, he will undersell them and crush them out of business."

"Yes, that's the way that father has explained it to me — supply and demand and competition. But that never explained it all to me, somehow. I suppose I am dull about those things, yet it seems to me there must be something above all that."

"So there is, human greed and selfishness."

"How beautiful it would be if love for humanity and the spirit of justice would supplant these two and govern the world."

His small eyes flashed in hers and went boring,



boring through her. "You have thought of these things some, have n't you?"

"Yes, in my stupid fashion."

✓ "I think too that the love for humanity and the spirit of justice must supplant the present inequality; or else" — He stopped short.

"Or else what?" she asked earnestly.

"Or else an open battle between oppressors and oppressed must come to pass."

"That will be murder and bloodshed trying to establish a reign of love."

"It may come without that. I hope it will. There are new signs every day that it will; there are others that it will not. The wisest know nothing when it comes to dipping into the future." He hastened to turn the trend of the conversation with: "It seems a pity that a girl of your intelligence can't find anything better. There ought to be something better for you in this great world."

"Thanks for the compliment you pay to my intelligence; but I don't seem able to do anything better."

"Have you ever tried?"

"I did dressmaking up to a short time ago, but it averaged no better; I guess I haven't got the business sense it requires. I used to do fancy work, but embroidering flowers at seventy-five cents the dozen is no more profitable, and it's far more trying."

"It's fancy work at plain prices, is it?"

"It's exhausting work at starvation prices."

"All work seems to be that nowadays."

"Was it ever any different?" she asked.

"I don't know as it ever has been. I have always thought of the world as a pyramid instead of a globe."

"That's a peculiar thought; why do you think it?"

"Well, when you think of a globe or a ball, you think of something that is round and equal and smooth. The world is anything but that. It's a pyramid, all the weight rests on the bottom layer. The higher the pyramid, the greater the weight on the bottom. The few who make the pinnacle press heavily on those below, and the innumerable mass of human beings at the foundation feel all the accumulated pressure of the layer on layer which scale upward to the top."

"I should think it would be fairer to stand the pyramid on end — then the few would have to uphold the many."

"It would n't stand that way; it would topple over." He saw that he was gradually wading into deeper water than she could follow him into, and again he changed the conversation with a characteristic flight of fancy: "If you could have one wish, what would you wish?"

"What a strange question, and how abruptly you put it! Are you the prince in the fairy-tale, and am I the maiden all forlorn whom the gallant prince comes to rescue?"

"No, I am only the watchmaker in the tenelement; but the fairies have bequeathed me the power of giving every one a wish; but unfortu-

nately I can't fulfill the wishes of those to whom I extend the privilege of wishing."

"Then what's the good of wishing?"

"Try it and see."

"I wish that my father might have a situation."

"Now I'll tell you the good of wishing. I learn so much about those who wish. Most people either think slowly and then wish something for somebody else, or they think quickly and wish something for themselves. You thought quickly and wished something for another."

"But I knew it could n't come true in any case. I fear we're getting to be what Jane calls an M. A. S."

"What's that?"

"A mutual admiration society."

"They do very little harm."

"Why, because they are of such short duration?"

"No, I have known some of the best of them to last for life. But a lasting society of that kind presupposes that the object of its organization be for good purposes, that the members have certain qualities in common, and that they be assessed equally."

He paused to reflect for material with which to continue his figure.

"We are home now," she broke in.

He looked up with a slight start. "So we are, and I never noticed it. It's early yet. Won't you walk on a bit? You threw the train of my thoughts off the track; you might help to get it back again."

"I'll come right down as soon as I put this bundle away, and help you start on the right track."

She returned before he thought she could have reached the top of the first flight of stairs. They moved down one of the narrow streets of the squalid district; in so far as they were concerned, the road might have led through the virgin woods of the spring's flush.

"You started to tell me something about your father being out of a situation."

"There, you see how selfish I am. I forgot all about poor father and his troubles. His firm discharged him on Saturday night; and they did it in such a mean, cowardly way. He has been in their employ for over eight years, and I am sure that during all that time he has n't missed a minute, and that he could n't have been any more faithful or honest, or tried harder, if it had been his own business. And how do you think they discharged him? They did n't have one word to say in person — they did n't have the courage. They wrote it out on a slip of paper, which they inclosed in his pay envelope."

What she said was commonplace and barren enough; but the way she said it, the sadness of her voice, the solemnity, the seriousness of her demure countenance, went straight to his heart.

He touched her hand softly, and their fingers clasped. She divined all the sympathy that his touch meant to convey, and she did not withdraw her hand from his. With the blood beating

through her slender frame quicker, they walked on.

She withdrew her hand suddenly, as if some one had passed whom she knew, and as if she were ashamed to be seen thus.

"Don't be discouraged," said he ; "he will find something."

"You are telling me what I have often told him. But it is very hard at his time in life. He grows so hopeless and depressed at times that it makes my heart ache to see him. The only real hope he has is in the opera. You have had so much experience in that direction ; tell me, what do you think of his chances of success ?"

"Do you believe in the opera ?"

"With all my heart and soul. Why do you ask the question ?"

He let the question pass unheeded ; she repeated it.

"Have you read the lives of the great musicians, Ida ?" He called her by her Christian name for the first time ; but it awakened no surprise in her — it seemed so natural to both of them.

"I know very little about their lives, save what father has told me here and there."

"Most of them had a fearful road to follow. It was like running a gantlet, the one line made of want, misery, and despair ; the other of misunderstanding, jealousy, defeat, and disillusion, all swinging whips of nails. At the end of the line was a dream, a smiling face, a something that lured them on, which enabled them to withstand the fierce

beating of the whips. Most of them never reached that resting-place; they fell, unable to longer endure the pain and the disappointment; some fell from sheer weakness, from illness, from starvation. No, old age cannot run that gantlet, it is only youth that can gird its loins and battle its way forward."

"Poor father!" she sighed. "And you have to run that gantlet?"

"It is different with me. I have become inured to it. I have grown up with that idea. Besides, there is no other road that I can travel, even if I wish to turn back."

"Sometimes," she said softly, "I think that what we have to endure is not half so bad as we think it. I know when I look back, what I used to think the hardest time in my life seems the happiest now."

"That's because you don't remember it distinctly; time blurs the sharpness. It's the same as looking at a picture from far off or near by. The pain is bad enough while it lasts. If other people cheated us or lied to us one half as much as we cheat ourselves and lie to ourselves, what a hue and cry we would raise!"

They passed along in silence. He regretted that he had disillusioned her; he might have done better to have let her nourish her heart on false hopes.

"I wish that I could help your father," he spoke feelingly, "and who knows — perhaps some day I can."

"I hope now that you have gone so far you will not turn back."

"You would run that gantlet, then?"

"At your age, yes; and even if I starved I would do it."

They were moving towards home now. The first star glimmered through the murky, smoke-blackened sky. Armies of men carrying their tools and dinner-pails were thronging the sidewalks. The night had come, and labor was seeking rest.

A woman holding a babe in her arms stood peering through the window of a saloon. Both of them noticed her at the same time. Mayhap the black shawl thrown across her shoulders — a black line drawn boldly athwart the fainter darkness of the early night — caught their attention.

A man tottered out of the dramshop and pushed the woman violently. She did not budge. "I'm waitin' fer yer, and I ain't a-going home without yer. It's a shame fer you, when we're a-wantin' bread, fer ter" —

"Go 'long now, I say," and without warning he struck her full in the face. The crowd interfered. Ida and Adolph pushed on.

"What beasts it makes of men!" she exclaimed, her whole body vibrant with sympathy for the beaten and abused woman. "I hate it! I could never bring myself to care for a man who drinks!"

She flushed pink; the image of Adolph carrying his drunken father up the stairs crossed her mind with flashlight-like rapidity and vividness;

but it was too late ; she had spoken. A spasm of pain shuddered across the heavy features of his face. She felt rather than saw it.

"I—I—spoke without thinking—I had no intention—forgive me," she stammered.

His thought was jumping over gulches, running, climbing, bounding back and forth, questioning, answering, holding counsel with itself. Should he tell her? Should he keep his lips sealed?

"I meant to tell you what I saw, what made me admire you," she hastened to say. "I saw you carry your father up the stairs one night, and you were so kind and gentle." It was the only oil she had to pour on the troubled waters.

He struggled with his secret ; it was the sharp and fierce conflict of a minute's duration between duty and love. He spoke :—

"I drink, Ida."

"You do!"

"Yes."

"But not to excess?"

"Yes."

"But you will give it up. Of course you will give it up."

"I cannot."

"I am surprised to hear you say that—a man of your force of character and will power."

He touched her hand again. They were nearing home. The darkness was complete.

"I promised my mother on her death-bed that I would give liquor up. I have broken the promise."



The words arose to his lips ; he would tell her how root by root he was plucking the spreading quitch from his system. Nay, he would not ; it was the part of honesty to strip all veneering, not to varnish it with coat afresh.

“But your will — your strength — you will make a promise to me and keep it?”

“I have inherited the evil — it is in my blood. Look at that! (he pointed to a piece of paper blown aloft by the wind) I am like that when the desire comes.”

“When it comes you will let me know. I can help you. I will help you. You will come?”

“If I can — yes.”

She had seen drunkards, and she loathed them with the instinct of a pure girl whose nature craves a life that is orderly and well regulated, but here was a man who drank and she loved him. How different it all was now.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HUNGER

ADOLPH had not left Ida a long while before I came trotting up with a plate of bread-pudding with which Ida had sent me. It was in the nature of a peace offering, I suppose; for she felt that she must have hurt his feelings, and she wished to make such amends as lay in her power. Possibly she may have thought that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach; but I have no right to hazard a guess—I was merely the dove sent forth from the ark with an olive branch. I tried to be as dove-like as possible.

His eyes scanned the bowl with a hungry, yearning expression. I pretended not to see it, turning away in that awkward way of mine; but I saw it, and he knew that I saw it. His high cheek-bones grew a trifle higher, and his square jaw a trifle squarer. I was apprehensive for the fate of the olive branch.

"I am very much obliged to you and your daughter for the consideration you have shown to me," said he, "but I have just finished my supper, and I could not eat another bite to save my soul from perdition, and you know how anxious I am to do that."

"Ida will be dreadfully disappointed," answered I; "she prides herself on her puddings (my wife had made it), and she seemed to take particular pains with this one."

His eyes glared eagerly again; unfortunately I noticed it, and still more unfortunately he noticed that I noticed it.

"I am sure that I should like to oblige you (I am sure that he would have), but as luck will have it, my appetite and I are at outs just now." Here again I am sure that he spoke the truth.

"You might try a little of it; Ida will scold if I come back with it untasted. When you reach my age, young man, you will learn that the worst thing you can do is to refuse a woman's cooking."

"She ought not to complain," replied he, "if her bread-pudding comes back on the water."

I did not insist any longer; I feared that I might offend him. I am never quite sure of my ground when talking with this young man. On the way back I thought that I might have at least induced him to have tasted a spoonful; certainly I went away with no leonine pride in this dove-like transaction.

Adolph was almost forced to cry aloud with the sharp pain that came from the gnawing in his stomach. He had forgotten his hunger when with Ida. It was seeking its revenge for the neglect now. He had not eaten since last night, and the prospects of a meal before breakfast the next morning were not good, and even that breakfast was not a thing with which to conjure his present dis-

tress. His father did not return. Vogel had the habit of disappearing for a day or two at a time; no one knew where, his son not excepted.

The small closet in the kitchen was empty; there were not crumbs enough for a mouse to dine on. Four mended watches lay on the bench, but although they might be pleasing to the eye, they but tantalized the stomach; there was little hope of his patrons paying before the late hours of the morrow.

He drank copiously from the kitchen faucet; coming back to his rooms, he lit the lamp and started to work. The gnawing became sharper with every minute. He was obliged to throw his pen aside and clasp his hands to restrain the cries that mounted to his lips.

He paced up and down the room, striving to lull his agony by motion. The torture grew unendurable; putting on his hat and coat, he made for out of doors. On the way to the street he passed Freytag's door; it was "roast night" at the butcher's home, and the savory smell of the meat was maddening. He would be welcome there, welcomed with true German hospitality. He took a step or two towards Freytag's door, then he turned on his heel. Consistency is paste at times; inconsistency the genuine jewel.

Just around the corner on the avenue is a restaurant, dight "Sunshine," where one can get what the window proclaims with flaring sign "A square meal for fifteen cents," providing one has the fifteen cents. No arithmetical table has com-

puted the value of fifteen cents to a starving man.

Probably the restaurant had been dubbed thus because no ray of sunlight ever penetrated the semi-darkness which ever enwrapped the place. It belonged to a widow by the name of Cairns; although she kept an eating-house, she by no means lived on the fat of the land. Her struggle for existence had been hard, and she had been hardened by the struggle. To those who asked for credit she invariably gave the answer: "My landlord don't take that for rent."

Herr Vogel had secured credit once by eating first and asking to be trusted afterwards. She was so dumfounded by his impudence that she could not refuse what he had already taken. After that incident she hung up a sign in the front of the shop, "Pay before eating." When the cabinet-maker caught sight of the placard, he made an effort to secure a meal on trust by flattering the woman on her business astuteness. She lost her temper completely at his effrontery, and ordered him out of the place. He surprised her still more by drawing the money from his pocket and paying cash. He increased her surprise to bewilderment on that same evening; he made love to her after eating, and actually wheedled her into returning the fifteen cents. She was hatchet-faced, lipless, freckled, and shapeless as a gnarled stick. It was the first time in her life that any human being had complimented her on her looks, and she was so delighted that she was willing to pay the cost.

When she returned to her senses, she considered Vogel the greatest rascal that the Lord had ever blessed with gray hair ; but for Adolph she always retained the profoundest respect. He paid cash ; he ate but little, and he made good his father's indebtedness of thirty cents. Despite his shabbiness, his ugliness, and his curtness, everybody paid Adolph a certain regard ; there was a dignity, a restraint, an indefinable air of genius clinging to this man which compelled admiration.

Twice Adolph passed the restaurant before entering. Mrs. Cairns was alone, and his courage waxed. He stalked over to a corner of the room and took a seat. The widow started with a detailing of her petty troubles — she served that as the first course to all her sympathetic patrons. Two customers entered, but considering her woes of more importance than her trade, she did not cease her dribble to wait on them. Adolph turned to eye the men who had seated themselves at the table opposite. He bowed stiffly ; they bowed still more stiffly in return. They were two watchmakers with whom he had served his apprenticeship in the factory.

The widow made a sudden pause in her jeremiad against the world. "Mr. Adolph, you are pale as a sheet ; you look faint. You have n't eaten a thing for a day or two, I'll wager, have you ? Come now !"

The watchmakers were glaring full at him, undoubtedly they had heard the widow's exclamation.

"Certainly I have," he rejoined; "it's just one of my terrible headaches. I get them just once in so often, you know."

"A cup of hot tea might do you good."

"No, thanks, I just dropped in to see you a second. I'll have to hurry along now." His great head inclined an imperceptible distance on his long neck and he left.

He dragged himself homeward, moving slowly with a sense of giddiness and faintness, feeling as if the earth were revolving at a tremendous rate of speed and his body were standing still. He had to repel the impulse to drop on the street and shut his eyes. When he reached home, his hunger would be stilled by sleep; it was well worth the effort, and he toddled along as one moves through an unfamiliar house in the dark.

Against the post of an electric arc-light that stood at the street corner, he leaned for support. A heavy hand thwacked him on the back.

"Oh, it's you, Malachy, is it?"

"How are you, Adolph?" asked the fat saloon-keeper.

"F-a-i-r," he drawled.

"I've been wanting to speak to you for a long time."

"Does my father owe you anything?"

"Don't get uppish, young feller. I never troubled you about your father's debts, did I?"

"N-o."

"It ain't that I want to speak to you about. You never give a feller a chance to speak a word

to you ; you always run away by the time I get my trap ready to talk."

Adolph braced himself a little firmer.

"If you don't feel well, don't let me keep you here."

"I feel all right, go ahead."

"To cut it short, and I never was much on the parley, I don't want you to blame me for your father's trouble. I never asked him to come over, and I never, so help me, coaxed him to drink."

"I never blamed you, did I?"

"No, but you put them peepers on me once or twice in a way that did a heap of talking."

"That's just my way."

It was more comfortable leaning against the post than walking ; he clung to it as a sick man to his bed.

"To be dead square with you, Adolph, I like your style. You stick to the old man the way the last drop sticks to the bottom of the glass. You never found no fault with me, and most people would have been around to the joint a-trying to raise the roof off. I'm a bad lot, I am ; but there's a spot in me that the black paint won't stick to. Oh, I ain't proud of it ; it ain't good for my line of business. I'm there to sell all I can, but I want you to know that I'm on the square ; and more's the time than one when your father wanted more than I'd give him. If ever you need anything, you can come over to my joint and get it. You're good for as much as you like."

It was all quite unexpected ; the softness of this



hard man touched Adolph. He extended his hand: "Thanks, Malachy. I never blamed you. If you had n't been there, some one else would have been; so that is all the same. Anyway my father has the taste for the cursed stuff."

"That's the way I look at it. But you're pale, young feller. When did you eat last?"

Malachy recognized that look and its concomitant symptoms — he had seen it before in his business.

"About five minutes ago."

"Don't give me that bluff; you're going home to take supper with me."

"I've just had my supper, I tell you."

He detached himself from the post and started on.

"Well, then, you'll eat again; it won't do you no harm."

"I'll have to hurry home; I've got work to do."

"You can always work, and you can't always eat," and he put his strong arm around the protesting weakling and dragged him along.

Malachy did not have to knock at the door of his apartment in the tenement; the moment his heavy step was heard on the landing the door was thrown open as if an electric device connected the two, and four children screamed in a chorus: "Dad's home."

With two boys clinging to his legs and a boy and a girl in his arms, he sprawled into the parlor. A woman with his rotundity of figure and of a

good-natured though blowzy appearance met him with a broad smile.

"Kids, get away a bit," he roared; "mother, shake hands with Mr. Vogel — that's the German for bird, and he's a bird I'm a-telling you."

He roared at his joke and the children roared with him, not seeing the point and not caring — anything their father considered fit to laugh at was good enough for them. His wife accepted it on the same recommendation and laughed too. The atmosphere was contagious and Adolph smiled, which was Adolph's way of laughing.

"Don't let him trouble you," said the woman, with a brogue that was richer and finer than her husband's ever dared to be. "He would joke with the Pope, he would. He'd make a joke of himself if there was no one left, he would."

"That's my wife," whispered Malachy loud enough for her to hear.

"And a sad day it was when I married you, James Malachy."

"She roped me in; she could n't get anybody else, could she, kids?"

"No," screamed eight leather lungs.

"I have the kids with me, you will observe," he said to the guest.

"No wonder; what with your spoiling them and undoing all the training they get all day, it's heathens your friend will think they are." As a matter of course the friend said that he had never seen better children, which was what he was expected to say.

"Stop your blarney, mother, and get something to eat ; it's too old that I am for your flattering, and I'm starving for hunger. It will be breakfast time before you get our supper."

She moved towards the kitchen, apologizing to Adolph that she was quite unprepared for a guest.

"The same story always," shouted Malachy. "I told you yesterday that I was going to bring a distinguished guest home. We can't eat excuses ; hurry with you."

He toppled the children in a heap. "The under one, that's Jim. Do you mind the muscle of him ? Larry is the one he's punching. Not so hard there, Jimmy, do you hear ? Larry, he's the scholar, only nine and in the second grade already. We'll make a priest out of him : he's got the head for books. Look at the arm of that Jimmy ; he'd leave his dinner to scrap, that boy, he would. The one that has the two of 'em by the hair, that's Burke. Big one for his age, eh ? He's only seven. You'll see him eat afterwards ; you'd think that each meal was his last, and that he only wanted to eat once in his life and be done with it. Come here, Nora ; punching your brother in the slats ain't no game for a girl, let the boys do that. Larry, if you don't stop pulling the end of your brother's mouth, I'll give you what for, do you mind that now ? Pitch in there, Burke ; what are you standing around for ? Get in with your left and help the scholar."

He lifted Nora on his knee. "I don't have anything to say about the girl ; she's her mother's

doings. She'll be ten before the month's gone. Taking piano lessons, and afore I know it the old woman will be having her take French next. But Lord," he chuckled, "I don't say nothing about the girl. You'll play something for the gentleman after supper, eh, Nora? I'd rather hear her than go to the theatre; she knows all the Irish songs. She's worse than an Italian; she would n't open her trap until she gets a penny out of me."

He dropped the girl from his knee suddenly and darted for the tangled heap of arms, legs, and bodies that was rolling on the floor.

"Do you want something in earnest? Don't you fellows know when to quit? You're worse than a pack of prize-fighters. How often will you let me tell you that it's a disgrace to worry the life out of me at night after I've been working hard all day? Larry, will you let go of the end of your brother's mouth?"

He wrenched the heap apart. "A fine boxer you are, Jim Malachy; the scholar can wallop the life out of you. It is n't your salt that you're worth."

"He hit me when I was down," gasped he of the great muscle.

"I put you down, too," exulted the scholar.

"Well, get out in the middle of the floor and have it out square," interceded the father.

They took positions in the centre of the room, and went at it tooth and nail.

Malachy laughed so hilariously that Adolph feared his fat sides would split in two. "Look

out for your right, Larry," he yelled; "it's only for books that you're any good. Look at the arm of Jimmy, and him only six. Burke, you keep away; must you always be a-fighting? Not so hard; it's only for fun, I'm a-telling you."

Mrs. Malachy entered the room to announce that supper was waiting. She separated the pugilists, dealing each of them a sound box on the ears.

"It's a fine pack you're raising," said the husband with affected ruefulness; "I can't make them leave off their rascality and fighting for the life of me."

"You're the worst rogue in the lot," scolded she; "it's you that sets them on."

The athletes advanced towards their father, rubbing their ears. "It's no consolation you'll be getting from me; you deserved it, and worse."

His wife upbraided him again, and he evidently found it a huge source of amusement.

"Ah, but the old woman can scold," he whispered to Adolph; "it's worth coming home to hear. It's better than paying to hear a funny play."

The mother called the girl to one side. She came running back with a pair of slippers, flat at the heels, and a torn and tattered coat that did duty for a smoking-jacket. With a pull at his red moustache and a kiss she handed the coat to her father, then she knelt on the floor to take off his shoes. "A family is the thing; it's the thing," he said to Adolph. "I'm the biggest

king in the pack here. It's better than a saloon, I'm a-telling you."

The table was laden with coarse food and plenty; there was such a clatter of knives and forks as Adolph never heard in his life; victuals appeared and disappeared with a now-you-see-it and now-you-don't-see-it like rapidity that was truly magical.

"Pitch in," counseled Malachy; "it's grab or starve here." The good-natured banter kept pace with the eating. Between mouthfuls the father descanted at length on the monster appetites of the various members there assembled. Such a laughing, hungry, gormandizing crowd of grigs as the family of the saloon-keeper Adolph had never seen before and has never seen since.

"If you would like a drop, it's here," said the host. "I never drink myself unless I'm drunk," and this Hibernianism was seen only by the German. Finally the paradox burst upon the Irishman and his wife; and laughter interrupted the eating for a long time.

When the supper was over — which was no sooner than the end of an hour — Nora sang an Irish melody in her thin, piping voice, accompanying herself on the piano, and playing just a little worse than she sang — the piano was infinitely worse than either.

But both the vocal and the instrumental music were wonderful to Malachy, and he listened with an air of solemnity and admiration that plainly said, "Can this be my daughter?" and he dealt

the scholar a cuff in earnest for daring to mimic the singer behind her back.

"She got that from the old woman," he exclaimed to Adolph when the last note of the tortured melody died away in agony; "there ain't any music in me. Wonderful, ain't it?"

Four times the guest made a vain attempt to leave; with the success of the fifth he was overwhelmed with requests to repeat his visit. When he returned to his denuded and blank rooms it seemed to him that he had shut the gates of paradise behind him. If he did not envy the happy fate of the Irish saloon-keeper, he at least wished that fortune might bless him with a humble home like that some day.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WEDDING

JANE has been betrothed for a month ; she will be married next Sunday. She believes that there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip ; and whenever she has a cup in her hand, you may be sure that she does not relax her grasp until it reaches her lips. Had she her way, the marriage would have taken place two weeks ago. Rounds has succeeded in interesting several capitalists in his manufacture of new styles of furniture, and the enterprise promises to be profitable beyond anticipation. As becomes a man who is largest shareholder and chief director in an important corporation, he has already moved away from the tenement to (I use his phrase) more luxurious quarters. Such a man (here I use Jane's phraseology) has chances and is considered a catch. Jane holds that a bird in the hand is a bird, and that a bird in the bush is an optical illusion.

Despite the reign of topsy-turvydom and excitement of the pre-nuptial days, Jane, who has not gone down-town for the last week, sleeps tranquilly until ten o'clock. She is accommodating herself to the new life gradually.

At the church ceremony there will be present



only the immediate family, the Vogels, — Ida insisted upon Adolph, and the attendance of the father was requested from the mere fitness of things, — and two friends of Rounds, one of whom is the foreman of the new factory. After the service we shall have a wedding supper in our apartment, where all our friends in the tenement have been requested to present themselves. Rounds will pay for all the expenses of the feast, and he desires it to be elegant, cost to be regarded.

Jane secured a printed invitation from the stationery department of the store, and she copied the form in handwriting. Ida argued that the action was silly to a degree, since most of the guests were unable to read English. Jane contended that this very objection enhanced the value of the invitations, inasmuch as good form ever impresses those most who know least. There was a battle royal when the time for posting them came. Ida was appalled at the extravagance of mailing letters to people who dwelt in the same building. Ida had the best of the argument, but Jane had her way, save in the two invitations to the Vogels, which the economical daughter insisted upon delivering in person. She had not seen Adolph in two whole days, and here was an excuse for a call.

When Ida went on her mission, she passed from nervousness to perturbation, for carrying an invitation to your sister's wedding to the man you think more of than any other man on earth is a delicate transaction.

"I've got something for you," she announced timidly.

Blushingly Adolph thrust the envelope in his pocket; he thought it might contain one of a dozen things, none of which happened to be correct.

"Don't put it in your pocket, read it now," commanded she.

"Oh, I can't go," he said, before his eyes had run over the first lines. She marveled at the rapidity with which he read.

"Why not, I should like to know!"

Almost involuntarily he took a swift inventory of his clothes, noting the numberless stains, the color long since faded, the gloss, the thin places that threatened to break out in open revolt at any minute, so sick were they of the threadbareness of their lot.

"Your clothes don't make any difference!" she exclaimed before he had time to frame an untruthful excuse. Ida continued as if she were talking to a brother, and a very dear brother; indeed, she felt on that ground of loving, innocent, easy familiarity. "You just get them cleaned and pressed and fixed, and they will look all right, I am sure."

"It's the only suit I have," he stammered, striving for his self-possession, which had left him in the lurch for once.

"Then come as you are."

"I should be out of place."

"You are never out of place."

As he was about to dispute this proposition and prove to the contrary, luck would have it that Bernheim the tailor should mount the stairs at that moment with a watch out of gear. He offered

to leave the watch for repair if Adolph would take his pay in tailoring. Ida whispered something to Adolph, and the fair exchange was concluded.

Whereupon Adolph arrayed himself in an old suit of his father, a coat that left room for another such as he to climb into and room to spare, and trousers that would with no amount of tugging reach farther than his ankles. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like him. He wrapped his garments in a bundle, and dropping it in the hallway before his door, whistled three times, which was the signal for Ida to carry the clothes to Bernheim. She made him understand that this particular suit was of more importance than the coronation robes of a king, and the tailor grinned sardonically, and tugged at the untrimmed ends of his frowzy black beard; and when the raiment went back, Adolph scarcely knew it for his own. Nine tailors go to the making of one man; but one tailor can make a whole army of men.

Vogel the elder called to give a verbal acceptance of the invitation. I never knew any one to accept anything so eagerly. It reminded him, so he said, of the time when he was married. Of what did it not remind him, in fact? It seemed to restore him to a long-lost memory. It recalled all the great things that he had ever done, all the great things he intended to do. That he was the Michael Angelo in wood; Small's substantiation of that fact, and "The Song of the Bell," were among the minor reminiscences awakened by the invitation.

On Sunday two carriages drove up to the tenement with the same dignified air that they might whirl to the porte-cochère of a mansion. Out of every window popped a head ; nay, it was impossible to see the windows for the heads. The tenement seemed built of heads — masculine, feminine, juvenile heads.

I know not how many eyes, reckoning two per capita, gazed down upon bride and groom, upon my wife and myself, as we walked towards the carriage. I never felt of quite so much importance. My wife coaxed me into wearing a silk hat and an embroidered silk waistcoat, both of which were in style at one time, which was once upon a time.

Vogel had never put his foot inside of a carriage before, and he strove to make the step appear of vast significance. He turned and lifted his hat to the mass of faces, at which the mass of faces grinned and roared. I feared that he intended to make a speech sparkling with Vogelisms ; but he relieved my apprehension on that score. He attempted to mount the step with a grace and ease that should denote that he was used to his own coach and two ; the result was that he missed his footing and fell. The living windows fairly shivered to pieces with merriment.

The bride and groom passed down the nave of the church followed by my wife and myself ; behind us were Adolph and Ida ; Herr Vogel led up the rear. Mein Herr did not seem to relish the position, for I heard him mumble incoherently.

Solemnly we grouped ourselves about the altar.

The sunlight poured brightly through the stained glass windows behind the chancel, giving a light that was not at all dim, but religious and impressive. It poured a golden haze on Jane's hair, which stood out in a contrast that was vivid and beautiful to the paleness of her cheeks and the whiteness of her dress. She held a few white roses tied with a white ribbon; she was angelic, in fine, crowned with an aureole of shimmering gold, a halo visible to all eyes.

Rounds has drawn himself up to his full height, which is not very high, but what he lacks in size he makes up in dignity. His shoulders are well thrown back, and his hard mouth is firmly set. His suit becomes him naturally and as if he had been born to the wearing of a frock. Strange how the mind is awake to the impressions of familiar things at an occasion so momentous.

The ceremony has begun; I must not let my mind wander, I must follow every word the minister speaks. My wife's hand presses my arm. Ah, I know what that pressure means. Our daughter is being taken from us. In a few minutes she will be ours no longer, but another's, to love and cherish, to harm or maltreat, for better or worse, as fate decides. Death separates and marriage divides.

"With this ring I do thee" — Rounds holds the binding circlet in his hand.

There comes an unexpected shriek; then the church becomes still again, silent as when the organ ceases to play in the midst of a pealing fugue.

“Sehen sie — look — mein schatten — my shadow!” Vogel points to a black outline of his figure clinging to the wall of the right transept.

The book wavers in the minister’s unsteady hand; Jane has turned to a pallor that is death-like; I fear my wife will faint; Rounds — I am not sure, it sounded to me like a curse; Ida clutches Adolph’s arm appealingly; Adolph holds his father by the wrist.

The old man stands speechless for a minute, his mouth open, with pointing finger, gasping, the personification of fright carved in stone.

He gives another shriek, louder and more piercing than the first, and bursting from his son’s puny grasp, runs down the nave, his thin chest almost bent to the ground, his short legs taking long steps, and so out of the church.

The minister regains his composure; the florid spots on the groom’s cheeks fairly glow, but he appears as calm as ever. The marriage is hastened, the minister ends with a few admonishing words on the folly of superstition and the wisdom of sense. We are moving up the aisle again.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE FEAST

WHEN we returned from the church we found everything prepared and in readiness; mother had employed extra help for the occasion. A half-dozen brilliant red roses shone on the white cloth, striking as the snow-line on the dead brown of the uncovered fields; a garland of smilax ran around the outer edge of the table; in the centre stood a tower-shaped macaroon cake, with high turrets made of frosting, willing to tumble before the onslaught of a victorious host.

At the head of the table sit Jane and Rounds, the latter saying plainly enough: "Take a good look at me, for it is the last time that you will ever see me in a place like this." Ida is seated next to Adolph; both are smiling and happy, wreathed with content and love, as the table is festooned with smilax. It is the common verdict that mother and I have the appearance of having returned from our own wedding instead of our daughter's, and that we might easily be mistaken for a young couple. I am tempted to take this with a grain of salt; but I take it. There is a placid expression on mother's face, as if she had taken it without the salt.

Ann Nielson shines clean and clear as the new moon. I am willing to wager that she has spent the whole week in scrubbing, brushing, and mending to make herself presentable. Next to her is the Polish shoemaker, his blond locks pomaded to the barber's taste ; he is decked in a brand-new white shirt, a white tie ditto, and his Sunday clothes newly pressed and cleaned (Bernheim must have been busy this week); so altogether he has more of the doctor's guild-mark and less of the shoemaker's than he has ever had since our acquaintanceship began. I am sure that this would please him did he know it, and I am sure that he knows it.

Madame Van Meer is upholding the affirmative end of the debate: "Resolved, That Medicine is of Less Value to Humanity than Magic," with Jan Zwiefka. Her dress is a study in scarlet; the tropical flowers that flaunt in gaudy self-consciousness down the front of it are a puzzle in botany. She is ever glancing down at the skirt to make sure that the black cats are not asserting their week-day privilege with her Sunday apparel.

Malachy and his wife are both on their company behavior, determined to be second to none in the point of good manners. He is dressed in a tight-fitting frock coat, especially tight across his broad chest; his white collar is in dangerous proximity to the tips of his ears; and his black tie, in the middle of which shines and sparkles a gem as large as the knuckle of my thumb, is a trifle the blacker by reason of the contrast in color made



by the red carnation in his buttonhole (he told me in confidence that he put the flower there at the last minute, fearing that his "rig-out" was altogether too priestly). His wife is holding herself as straight as her avoirdupois will allow; her hands in her lap, a smile on her face that might be termed seraphic if it were not studied.

Freytag and his "frau" can glare down on the great roast, which they presented to us, dressed and cooked for the occasion, without stretching their short, thick necks. The butcher receives all compliments with a deprecatory air: "It is nothing; if the wedding had not come at just the wrong time, he would have sent a roast that was a roast; this is what he called a chop."

The Bernheims are the butcher's neighbors; they look odd — the quintessence of oddness itself. He plucks at his frowzy black beard, and grins and grins, reaching the ends of his ears with the corners of his mouth a little nearer with each gymnastic smile. His wife plucks him by the sleeve and frowns reprovingly.

Last and least are the friends of my son-in-law. They seem painfully aware of the fact that they have rented their dress suits for the supper, and as if they dreaded lest the others discover it. Bernheim's all-knowing look might speak with authority on the subject. I have been guessing the nationality of the foreman and his wife; I waver between Scotch and Irish. As we shall never meet again, I feel justified in dismissing them with a line.

We regret the absence of Herr Vogel. He would let the rest of us know that we had one distinguished guest in our midst. However, he may pop in at any minute, and make up for lost time by tooting his horn with a gusto that surpasses precedent.

Surely is this a feast of all peoples, and the good Lord must have beamed with satisfaction to have seen the children of His various nations gathered about the tenement table in amity and friendship.

The Polish doctor ogles Ann lovingly behind the broad back of the fortune-teller, much to her disgust and to Ann's, who stands tiptoe on the summit of dignity.

Without warning Jan jumped to his feet and started to sing a Polish war-song, which no one understood, but which every one enjoyed so much that he was encored again and again. He responded graciously, singing the anthem louder each time, as if its success depended entirely upon noise. The ball is set a-rolling now; another guest proposes another diversion, I forget who and what, for just then there came a loud knock at the door, and Malachy's bar-tender stalked in with a large bowl and an armful of small paper packages. Straightway Malachy stated that he would provide us with something as necessary for enjoyment at a wedding as a corpse for a funeral — this may not have been a very elegant way of putting it, but Malachy has his original expressions, just as he has his original recipe for compounding what he is fond of terming "Malachy's Own and Celebrated Punch," which he lost no time in making.

Like one who has firm faith in his own potions, Malachy, before asking anybody else, tasted the concoction first. After the pregustation he drank a whole glassful with a smack of his lips. Whilst filling our glasses he regaled us with a hundred and one Irish stories. You have undoubtedly heard most of them, for they are as old as the lakes of Ireland; but they were new to most of us, and those to whom they were not new liked hearing them again. This encouraged him to venture on a song, and we all joined in the chorus with such a vim that the plates rattled on the table.

The punch circulated freely. I notice that Adolph has left his untouched, and that Ida, as if to aid the good resolution, has followed the example.

Rounds's friend, the foreman, proposes and gives a toast to the best of bosses. "His face is red as a beet," to quote Malachy's post-prandial comment; and he shouts the innumerable virtues of my daughter's husband at the top of his brazen voice. He is a tall, thin man, all legs and arms, and he throws his arms about as if to ward off a cyclone. Approving comments in four languages interrupt him constantly; but they evidently do not disturb him — they give him time wherein to rest his over-tired arms.

The punch circles around the table again. Even Rounds has grown loquacious and agreeable. The Polish doctor has shifted his affection from Ann to the madame. She is reading his palm, holding

it a little tighter, I think, than is necessary for the operation ; but Jan does n't mind the squeezing ; for he is ogling her with his blue eyes leaning far out of their sockets.

Malachy springs to his feet ; he is the self-elected and irrepressible toast-master. He has called upon Adolph for a few remarks. Adolph speaks with a consummate ease, as if he were talking to a single friend instead of a host of people. Rounds winces slightly as Adolph faces him ; the corners of his hard, firm mouth draw tighter, as if he is expecting the necessity of self-defense.

"My friends," said Adolph, "I am sure that Mr. Rounds could have selected no more fitting partner for the business of his life. He has hit the nail square on the head this time ; the marriage augers well. He has found a wife who will stick to him like glue. With such a woman for a companion, no man ought to find life dull or be bored. Her husband is, I am sure, a plane man, level and square, who will hammer away until he makes a success ; and while he may know much about vices, he is addicted to no vice whatsoever. Moreover, he is a patient man, well drilled, full of wise saws, and bits of learning. He will never go lumbering along through life. He will never prove an exception to his own rule ; and he is too high-minded to use any man for a tool."

I have no means of ascertaining whether or not all our guests unraveled this mélange of puns ; I judge by the serious countenances of some of the listeners that the speech was taken in sober ear-

nest. Rounds smiled faintly — he was obliged to by the nature of the case.

More punch. Malachy's great bowl must be connected with the sea. Jan is declaring his passion for Ann openly, and the madame is no less open in her disapproval. Ann has quite forgotten her superior military origin, for she lets Jan approach her as familiarly as he pleases, and she laughs and blushes with each fresh outpouring of the shoemaker's flood of amorous diction. Weddings make weddings; accident is the surest matrimonial agent in the world.

Bernheim takes the floor. His wife whispers to him in a language that I can't understand; but I am quite sure that she is saying something to the effect of, "Don't make a fool of yourself."

He relates this fable, which he told us he had gleaned from an old Jewish book: —

"A certain man had three friends: the first of these was his bosom friend; the second, a boon companion; the third, one whom he prized the least. Once, quite unexpectedly, the king sent a messenger to command this fellow to appear before him in his palace immediately. The request was as unusual as it was without warning, and he was afraid to go alone. He asked his bosom friend to accompany him, but the request was refused. He besought his boon companion, who offered to go with him as far as the palace gate, but not one step farther. Thereupon he went to his third friend, from whom he expected least, since he had always regarded him with the least esteem. To his

surprise this last one went with him not only to the king, but even pleaded with the royal personage for his friend's life. Now I will name these three to you in the order of the love which the man bore to them. The first was money; the second was wife and child; the third was honor and righteousness. So when God, the king of kings, sends the messenger death to summon the soul of a man before His throne for judgment, money, of which he thought most, will not accompany him at all, for no matter how much he has he can take none of it with him. His wife and children may go to the grave with him, weeping and wailing; but farther they cannot go; but the third friend, honor and righteousness, goes with him even unto the throne of God to plead his cause."

When Bernheim has finished his moral tale, Vogel, out of breath and much the worse for liquor, seats himself at the table. He is prolific with apologies, and does his best to make it clear that he was detained by important and unforeseen business. He sidles up to the fortune-teller and says to her with a triumphant smile: "I told you, I be not dead!"

The cloth is cleared, the long table is taken apart and relegated to the hall. The tenement children throng the stairs and the passageways, mother and Ida distribute among them all the viands that have been left over from the feast — which is astonishingly little, considering the surplus with which we started — and the little ones go on their way rejoicing.

I finger the chords of the piano, starting a waltz, and the dancing begins in earnest. Ann gallops about with the Pole; the madame joins hands with Vogel; Malachy insists that his wife take a whirl with him; Bernheim is tripping it with his better half, and Freytag and his "frau" are bound not to be outdone. There is precious little room for so many dancers to twirl, but a strong will makes a wonderful way.

Jane usurps my place at the piano, declaring that for this once mother and I shall dance to her music; whereat the guests range themselves about us, and clap and cajole and tease until refusal is out of the question. The company join hands, and we are forced to dance within this animated circle.

We did it, we did it; we danced at our daughter's wedding! We moved slowly and awkwardly at first, I fear, for mother and I are not as young as we used to be; but towards the end of the dance the grace of youth was ashamed to have deserted us in our old age, and it returned once more. Despite her excuses and apologies, I am positive that mother was proud of her agility.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ALL IN A WEEK

JANE and her husband left the city for a week's trip — which is, so to speak, to take but a quarter of the honeymoon. Rounds is quite willing to journey till the moon grow full; but it seems that his business interposes with strenuous objection. I can do nothing from lack of occupation; he is too occupied to do anything; still I would prefer condition number one. Mother has been endeavoring to cheer me with the prospect that when my son-in-law returns he will find a position for me in his office. But that is a reversal of the usual process, and I build little hope thereon.

I have betaken myself to the factory every morning as regularly as if I were on the pay roll. It deludes me with the idea that I have something to do; the delusion might be good as reality, if I were only paid. I meet people on the way thither, people whom I was wont to shun, for I dread the questions which they are ever asking — "What are you doing now? The same position yet? How are you getting along?" With the best grace and the boldest countenance in the world I can answer them now, "I am just taking a stroll over to my son-in-law's factory. You know it, of course,



The United States Fine Furniture Factory, Incorporated." Magical words these to those who are ignorant as to their true significance. "Ah, so that is your son-in-law, is it?" All obnoxious queries cease. They see me hasten to the hive, and they draw the conclusion that I must come forth laden with honey.

The foreman treats me with a respect to which I am not entitled. He knows not how Rounds regards me, and he is bound to stay on the safe side. So I wander at will in that roaring region of belts, saws, and planing and carving machines. And what an immense office, and what an army of clerks; I could join their ranks and not be noticed. If Rounds has but the will, how easily can he enlist me. Moreover, the business has grown with a rapidity so marvelous that it must exceed Rounds's fondest dream, which is saying much, for Rounds's dreams of fortune are fond to doting.

Mr. and Mrs. Rounds came home to-day, and they moved directly to their new home. There has been so much else to relate that the new home quite escaped my treacherous memory. The house stands just on the border line of the fashionable district; Jane boasts that she can look from the front window into the back windows of one of the leaders of fashionable society, which she considers an advantage by no means to be despised. Let me go into no extended description of furniture, fittings, and arrangement; suffice it to say that Jane's new home is far removed from anything suggestive of a tenement. Mother and Ida spent

the last week in preparing and cleaning, so that there was nothing left for Jane to do but to take possession. Mother and Ida will return to the tenement and be as contented, in so far as either of them will ever inform me, as if they had never put foot inside of a palace. How strange, one sister lives in a palace, the other in a hovel. I am led to think sometimes that blood is thinner than water. I hope that blood will convince me to the contrary before my life be ended.

I shall ask Rounds for a position the first thing to-morrow. I cannot bear to break another bit of the shell of mother's nest-egg. He might ask me; he knows how badly I stand in need of it. Yet not every beggar has the right to stand with hat in hand and lips pursed; that is really begging the question. I must ask.

He saw me up in the second floor, watching the man at the circular saw.

"You here?" he said rather roughly.

I was nonplused for a minute, then I answered: "Yes, I am here; in person."

The man at the saw smirked surreptitiously, the kind of smirk one feels rather than sees. Rounds saw it. The spots flared. It would seem that I have become what is called a standing joke in the factory. The workmen, always so apt at nick-names, have dubbed me "Mr. Poor Relation." The appellation has annoyed me far less than it has Rounds. I can't help it; and he is certain that he can.

"I am afraid that you might get hurt up here,"

he said, calling me to one side ; " these belts running in every direction and all this machinery make it dangerous. The hands are careless, and they might run against you with a heavy piece of timber and push you against one of the saws."

" Thank you for your solicitude," replied I, " you are very kind ;" and I left.

The sign over the door of the factory, " No Admission except on Business," applies to me as well as to the veriest stranger. The whole world has become a shut door, with the same sign painted on the lintel. I have no business ; I cannot enter.

" You are home earlier than usual," said mother, regarding me with an air of expectancy. She saw my face, and she bent her eyes on the cooking. Ida's lips compressed, her face grew long, and she went on with her sewing, the needle and thread fairly flying.

" Yes, somewhat earlier, mother," was all that I could answer.

" Are you very tired, Thomas ? "

" Very tired, mother ; tired to death."

" You had better rest this afternoon."

" I shall have plenty of time to rest."

" Did you speak to him about the — about the position ? "

I shook my head.

" Did you see him ? "

" Yes, he spoke to me ; but the conversation was such that I hardly got an opportunity to say what I intended."

" There is no hurry, Thomas ; an opportunity will present itself."

I could contain myself no longer, and I blurted out, "Oh, mother, they don't want me there. He sent me home. He is afraid that I might get hurt." I dared trust myself to speak no longer; the tears were pressing to my eyes, and I struggled to hold them back where a man's tears belong.

Her arms swept around my neck with all the warmth and the fervor of the days of our courtship. "Thomas, he is a black-hearted, bad man. I thank God that you have a home where you won't get hurt, and where you won't be sent away." And I thanked God for that, too.

Ida had never a word to say; her demure face drew close, close to her sewing.

This afternoon Jane called; the first time since her marriage. She had little to inquire concerning our welfare; she had an endless amount to say about herself. "I have had several calls already," she boasted, "and from very fashionable people, too. Quite surprising, is n't it? Mrs. Wilkinson left her card, but I did n't happen to be in. You have seen her name in the paper often, Mrs. J. P. Wilkinson; her husband is in the hardware business. Very prominent people, and so plain and unassuming; just as if they were no better than the most ordinary. I used to sell her ribbons at the store; but I hardly think she could remember me. Would n't dream of finding me where I am, you know. She was very fussy about ribbons, I must admit; but then that's just a way of society people. I expect that I shall get that way myself before long. Will wants me to move right on in

that circle. Oh, he's got a lot of ambition, has Will; and he's as ambitious for me as he can be. He knows some of the men in our neighborhood already, and he is going to join their club. His name comes up before the Friendship next week. I am sure that he will be elected, too. Why should n't he be? He has just as much money as most of them, and I'll wager a great deal more, if the truth were only known. Will says it is just as easy to move with the best people as with the cheapest. We intend to give a series of dinners later on, and he wants them as swell as they can be. Money to be no object this time. I know a thing or two about serving a dinner now, let me tell you. We did n't stay at the best hotels for nothing. I kept my eyes open and took notes. I shan't let any of the caterers dictate to me. I know just how things are done, and I intend to have them just that way and no other, caterer or no caterer. I start taking French lessons next week, and Will starts with me. It does n't matter so much whether or not you can speak French; it's just to let people know that you are studying, and interested in culture, and all that. We'll have our names in the paper before long, when we give our dinners, see if we don't. I learned that it is n't such a hard thing to do. Mrs. Carter has informed me so. Oh, I have learned quite a number of things from her. She is my neighbor on the right, in the brown-stone front. Her husband has stock in Will's company, seventy-five shares, I think. She is very kind about telling me every-

thing, not a bit stuck up. She has such a nice, tactful way of doing it all, besides. Just as if she were asking for information instead of giving it, you know. 'Don't you think so, Mrs. Rounds?' is the way she usually puts it. She even told me the name of her dressmaker, which is quite a favor."

Thus Jane. I detect a change in her already, a slight but perceptible shift in her vocabulary, in her mannerisms. These straws show which way the wind is blowing. I fear me it will blow that direction very strongly after a while, and that it will be the prevailing wind.

Jane has been exerting her persuasive powers to the utmost to induce Ida to let her sewing rest for a while and come to spend a week or two with her; but Ida refused with a firmness and vigor beyond her wont.

"Could n't think of it, Jane dear; my place is right here. Who would take care of father and mother if I were to go?"

"I intend to have the three of you together," affirmed Jane, poking the carpet with her foot, "in a little while, as soon as we are settled."

There the discussion ended.

When Jane left, mother went out into the hall with her. I knew intuitively that the conversation concerned me.

"I will do my best, you may be assured," I heard Jane call out as she hurried down the stairs.

Mother returned to me with her face beaming and radiant. Jane had pressed a twenty dollar

bill in her hand. Jane may have her faults, I am the last one to deny that, but she has a good heart when all is said and done.

"Thomas," remarked mother, when we had retired for the night, "don't you think that we may have misjudged our son-in-law (somehow neither of us can get accustomed to speaking of him by his first name)? It may be more than possible that you might get hurt by the machinery. Jane told me that he would not allow her to visit the factory for the same reason."

"He is an ideal husband and son-in-law," thought I, but I let the reflection pass unexpressed.

"I am quite sure," she went on, "that he will find something for you to do. I would n't have you ask him for anything in the world, if I thought he would refuse you; but from what Jane says, I am positive that he won't. Will you ask him, Thomas; or do you think it best to leave it rest as it is?"

A positive answer to her last question is on my lips; but I stop to consider Ida, mother, all Jane has, and all they have not. Right willingly would I humble myself in the dust for their sake. If mother could bring herself to intercede with Jane for me, why should n't I go to Rounds for her?

"Yes, mother," answered I, "I will go to-morrow."

Mathilda falls asleep, a quiet smile on her worn face. She dreams all will be well for me. I toss and toss throughout the entire night, foreknowing Rounds's ultimatum as well as if it were already

given. Pride goeth before a fall ; my pride will not grow weary from a long journey.

In the morning Mathilda helped me on with my overcoat and surveyed me critically, as if to assure herself that I should n't lose the position through any fault of her own.

"Thomas," sang out mother's voice from the open window, as I shambled with hesitating step and slow down the street.

I was not taken unawares ; I expected a final word of advice.

"Well, Mathilda?"

"Wait for me, I am going with you."

She has figured it out with feminine mathematics that it will be twice harder for Rounds to refuse two.

She held fast to my arm, as if to instill me with the hope and confidence that thrilled her, and thus animated with new courage, I pushed intrepidly towards the office with the brass plate "W. Rounds. Private" on the door. The errand boy barred our path.

"Mr. Rounds is busy ; you will have to send in your card, sir."

I had no card to send. "Tell him," I paused (curiosity pricking the ears of the corps of clerks interrupted its work), — "tell him that his father-in-law is here."

"Good for you, Thomas," said Mathilda approvingly.

The clerks grin and snicker behind their ledgers and folios. Calling dignity to our aid, Mathilda



and I sit upright and grave on the chairs to which we have been assigned.

He kept us in waiting long enough to satisfy the importance of one thrice greater. Finally the boy announced that Mr. Rounds was at leisure.

He greeted us stiffly, opening with, "Well, what can I do for you this morning; I am very busy, you see."

Mathilda pressed my hand. "I see that you are busy," replied I; "you have that attitude which denotes business. I am not busy, I regret to say. I should like to be busy, and we—I came to see if you could not help me in that direction. Any trifle around here in the office or elsewhere, such as you have no one else doing at the present time"—

"To be very frank," interrupted he, "I talked the matter over last night with my wife"—

"Our daughter," interrupted Mathilda this time, red and ruffled.

A squeeze from my hand assured Mathilda that I commended her conduct.

"Your daughter," he affirmed with mock politeness, "if you prefer. I told her then, as I must tell you now, that I don't think it advisable to hire relatives. I would say the same thing to my own brother or father. Business is business with me. The point is just here, if you hire a stranger and he don't suit, out he goes. A man need n't hesitate about discharging him for a second. But with a relative it is different; there is always the family to consider, and if the work is n't satisfac-

tory and a discharge follows — well, the whole family, from A to Z, is put out. You catch the point, do you not ? ”

“ Quite, quite,” nodded Mathilda.

“ Your reasoning is very logical and dispassionate,” said I.

“ I am glad that you are sensible enough to see it in that light.”

“ Thank you for the compliment,” courtesied Mathilda. I was scarcely able to discover from her voice whether she spoke in earnest or sarcasm ; Rounds seemed still more perplexed.

“ Now, if there is anything that I can do for you in the way of ” —

“ No, no, nothing at all in that way, I thank you.”

“ I just meant it as a loan, you know.”

“ No, thank you,” I reassured him. “ Relatives ought not to borrow from one another — on the same principle as they ought not to work for one another ; it is apt to disturb family relations.”

“ You may be right,” said he.

“ I am sure that I am right,” answered I.

“ Thomas,” blurted out Mathilda, “ Mr. Rounds has such a kind heart that he does n’t believe in hiring relatives, because he can’t bear to discharge them.”

Her hand slipped in my arm ; and gathering her skirts, she favored her son-in-law with a farewell bow that was inimitable and not in the least perplexing.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE PAPER IN THE WIND

THE desire for drink, springing upon Adolph, seized him by the throat. He struggled with the beast until his strength failed, his courage oozed, and his heart grew faint. Instead of seeking Ida for assistance, he shunned her. If he were victorious, it would be delightful to recount the battle; if he fell victim — it would be better that she did not know.

And the war waged a day and a night. He was unable to sleep; he was unable to work. He was being consumed by a single thought, he must drink, he must cool the burning fever. At moments it seemed to him as if sand were sifting through his blood, drying his veins as it ate its way through them. It was no longer to be endured. He was being whipped with a lash; he had but to step beyond its range to free himself from the pain and the torture. He hastened over to the avenue, oblivious to everything but the fact that he must quench his thirst. He was an Arab, who sees the refreshing green of the oasis after the protracted dreary march through the desert.

He had reached the saloon. He hesitated for a second. He had stood face to face before the

enemy in his past in combats equally desperate, and he had been the victor; he had conquered himself before when the spoils of his triumph had been but an idle tribute of passion to will. If he won now, he might bear passion in chains and lay it submissive at love's feet.

He rushed on.

Some one caught him by the arm. "Hello, Adolph!"

It was Schmitt the actor.

"What's your hurry, where are you running to?" asked Schmitt, in German. "One might think that the devil was after you."

"There may be more truth than poetry in that," answered Adolph lugubriously.

"We can give him the slip easy enough. Come in here. Let's have a drink. I have n't seen you in a long time, and I have a heap to tell you. I've got a business proposition to make."

Schmitt swung open the screen door, Adolph followed; it seemed that a chain of iron was tied to his foot, dragging him where it listed.

You would never have taken Schmitt for an actor — not even on the stage, perhaps. He was undersized and over fat. His brown hair, cut close, ran down on his low forehead almost to his flat, well-nigh African nose. His eyes were long and small, his mouth flabby and large — in truth, his whole face had a horizontal pull.

Passing through the saloon, they walked into the small summer-garden at the side. It was one of those last of April days that give a hint as well

as an earnest of a beautiful May. A group of men and women sat in a corner about an oblong rustic table.

"There 's the troupe," said Schmitt.

Adolph knew them all; he had made his first appearance in that company. When he left their ranks, no one was a whit the more intimate with him than on the day of his enlistment. They greeted him with indifferent cordiality.

There was Fräulein Graff, who labored times without number to win Adolph's love, all because he was absolutely unimpressionable, and who ended by hating him for his induration to her seductive charms. There was Fräulein Keller, tall, languorous-eyed, commanding, who was forever boasting that she might have climbed to the top rung on the ladder of fame, if she had been only fortunate enough to have begun life on the English stage. Her voice was monotonous, weak, and colorless, never rising above a certain key. She retained her position through her good looks. There was Schmitt's wife, who resembled him closely enough to be his sister. The rôles which the other women refused generally fell to her. There was Frau Bauer, the widow, who was forty at the least; she was the company's leading juvenile, her small features and her smaller stature, relatively speaking, fitting her for the position naturally. There was her daughter, a child of six, who had learned to lisp on the stage. There was Herr Mueller, who courted Frau Bauer assiduously; the Herr could play any instrument, sing any song, play any part.

He was Jack-at-all-trades, and never out of a job. Fräulein Keller and Frau Bauer were both desperately enamored of the Herr's fascinating accomplishments, and he drove them both, according to his humor, into distraction. Lastly came Herr Koerner, half acrobat and half tragedian, and not half good in either, who favored a Frenchman with his imperial, and who thought the whole French race must be flattered by the favor. He paid continuous court to Fräulein Graff, but she was perfectly free to confess that she did n't care a straw about him. Last came several new members whom Adolph did not know, but they evidently knew him by reputation; for he overheard one of them ask, "Is that the 'Iceberg'?"

For theatrical folk they took life seriously enough. The women were either sewing or crocheting; the men were talking in low tones, as if considering some important transaction. Existence was a problem for them; a week here, a week there; then two weeks nowhere. Day and night was a continuous grind of rehearsing new plays and acting old ones.

Their seriousness vanished only too quickly when the wine began to flow; for Schmitt, who happened to be flush, would consent to nothing else but wine, much to the consternation of his wife. She whispered to him admonishingly; he requested her sharply to tend her own affairs, and the whole company laughed.

Adolph lifted Frau Bauer's daughter on his knee. She was an attractive child, surcharged

with health and vitality, her complexion pink as a rose-leaf. What a life, what an environment for a youngster! thought Adolph. His heart went out to the neglected, untaught soul, left to her own resources, free to pluck whatever poisonous flowers she would from the miasmatic soil. The girl clung to Adolph affectionately, discovering with the infallible intuition of childhood that she had chanced upon some one to love and protect her. The mother called, but she would not desert her new friend. "You see," whined Frau Bauer, "what a child I have; nothing will make her mind; she does as she chooses, and if she goes wrong she will blame me;" and straightway she assaulted Herr Mueller with all the batteries 'of her eyes, her white teeth, her glances, her smiles. But all her well-directed charges fell wide of the mark; the Herr was lost in dreamy reverie with Fräulein Keller.

The wine was having its effect; and being a cheap wine, the effect followed the cause with a rapidity that was wonderful. A good-natured badinage began. In a few minutes what had been said in fun was taken up in earnest, and badinage passed to bickering, and bickering swept into the dangerous border-line of quarrel.

"If I had only started on the English stage," complained Fräulein Keller, "I might be as great as Ellen Terry; her acting has been compared to mine often."

"If — if," retorted Frau Bauer, "I could speak French as well as Madame Bernhardt, I would be the greatest actress on the French stage."

The Fräulein lost her temper completely. "You can't act in any language; you ought to be proud to appear in the same company with me."

"I depend on something else besides looks for my position," retorted the other.

"That's fortunate," came the quick response, "otherwise you would never have a position."

Herr Mueller was appealed to as referee. He decided that one person could not have everything; Frau Bauer had the brains and the talent, Fräulein Keller the looks. The verdict was satisfying to neither. Each claimed both. Fräulein Graff sided with Frau Bauer. "It was none of her business, but she could never see where Fräulein Keller's good looks came in." This involved Herr Koerner and Herr Mueller in a quarrel within a second's time. They began a fierce duel of words, opposing their long and inexhaustible list of excellences against each other. The manager thumped on the table with his heavy stick.

"Ladies and gentlemen," spoke he, "how often have I to tell you that you are like a watch (he lifted his large silver timepiece in his hand and held it aloft): if one wheel of the watch stops to call the other wheel names, can the watch run? Certainly not! Every wheel has its work; one wheel for this, the other wheel for that. Each wheel thinks it is the most important, but one wheel thinks it is just as good as the other; they must all go, or the watch can't tell the right time."

He sat down, mopping his brow, perspiring from the tax levied by his oratorical effort. The logic



wrought a general amnesty. Adolph smiled; he had heard the same speech a thousand times, and he had never known it to lose effect for the minute. There came more wine and less quarreling; in fact, as the wine increased, the tierce and carte of personalities diminished.

"I'm getting tired of Mueller," whispered Schmitt to Adolph; "he is getting so conceited that there is no getting along with him. He makes half the trouble. He thinks that if he leaves, the company will disband. I have made up my mind to let him quit Saturday night after the performance. I want you to take his place."

Adolph shook his head. "I've had enough of the stage. Besides, I can't sing."

Schmitt pondered for a second. "That's true; but we will find a way out of that. Just you say you'll come, and I'll find a place for you."

Adolph remained firm. He wondered how he had been able to breathe in that atmosphere, mephitic with petty squabbles, silly jealousy, narrow ideas, vulgarity, and tinsel tawdriness.

"We're going to be here another week at the Academy, then we're going to work our way eastward slowly. If you change your mind, come to see me. By the way, have you got a German play that you want to sell?"

"Yes, I've got a play that I think will suit you. A German-American play, with the action half laid in Germany, the other half in America. It ought to be just the thing for your theatre public. I wrote part of the thing when I was with you, over three years ago."

"Bring it along and let me see it. If it is what I want, I'll give you fifty dollars down, and the other fifty when I can."

Fräulein Graff took a seat beside Adolph, much to the chagrin of Herr Koerner and the amusement of the others. She sought to engage him in a conversation about the good old days, her caressing glances eager to thaw his frigidness with their burning warmth. Adolph refused to thaw. The company laughed aloud; Herr Koerner's guffaw rising bold and clear in the general chorus. Suddenly Adolph became aware of the imminence of a renewal of hostilities. He caused a disarmament by tactfully dividing his attention between the enraged Romeo and the disquieted Juliet. Herr Mueller, whom the wine had made ebullient, began the "Gaudeamus," and all joined in, Adolph included. He began to envisage the world with a golden halo.

It was almost dusk when Adolph staggered homeward, constantly compromising between his right leg and his left to maintain a balance.

He reached the corner just as Ida passed on her way to the sweat-shop with her bundle.

She saw him waver along and she stood still, affrighted, scarcely able to realize what it all meant. Then its significance flashed and thundered across her mind. Her cheeks flushed with pity and humiliation.

"Let me carry your bundle." His hand finally reached the brim of his hat, but failed in the attempt to lift it from his head. A sensation

of repulsion overcoming her, she drew back. He lunged forward, and fell beside her.

She stifled the cry of pain, and ran on as fast as she could run.

He pulled himself to his feet and looked around. She was gone. Even in his stupor he was awake to the full meaning and bitter consequence of his defection. He was fairly shocked into sobriety. His step became surer and steadier. He felt as if he were carrying a heart of lead, and as if the rest of his body had no weight whatsoever.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### DUTY

ADOLPH staggered past me on the stairs. My grief and pain were greater than my surprise; it was not the first time that I had beheld him thus. I have seen him once before — I believe twice — when under the influence of liquor; moreover, several quidnuncs have taken pains to inform me that he is addicted to the habit, and I know full well how inexorable is the law of heredity. ✓

I must speak to Ida to-night. I have dreaded and shirked the duty for a long time, now hiding my head in the shifting sands of procrastination, now silencing conscience with the argument that when the bad bridge came, other means of crossing the stream would discover themselves. How ready is the imagination to put a boat, oared and manned, under every weak bridge that spans the terrible stream of actualities. I shall positively speak to-night; the longer I defer, the deeper will be the heartache for her and for me. Alas, to spoil love's young dream! Poor Adolph, poor Ida! How my sympathy goes out to both of them. I scarcely know whom I pity the more. "Even unto the third, and the fourth generation," how cruel, how incomprehensibly cruel!

Ida's manner, the expression on her face, the nervous twiddling of her fingers, tell me that she has a secret to unburden. She is paler than ever; cloud-darkened and woebegone her face. She seems to have aged by a year. I wonder if she could have caught sight of Adolph in his pathetic plight? I hope not; the shock would be too great for her delicate, high-strung nature. I would far rather tell her — I can break the sad news gently and by degrees. Oh, why did n't I impart my fears long ago!

We are alone; mother has gone to bed. Ida sits there so quiet and still; it is the quiet of the prisoner in chains; of the fretful spirit weighted down by gloom and depression. She will speak in a minute. I give her all the encouragement in the world. I turn my troubled thoughts over and over in my mind. How shall I put them in the kindest and gentlest manner?

"Father," comes her subdued voice.

"Yes, Ida."

"I saw Adolph to-night."

"Yes."

She has left her chair to perch herself on my knee.

"He was" — how she throbs — "he was — he was n't as he usually is."

"I saw him too, Ida."

"To-night?"

"Yes, Ida."

"Then you know."

"Y-e-s."

"He has told me long ago — I knew it — he has been very honest!"

"Ah!"

"I thought he would give it up — for my sake. He told me that he promised his mother on her death-bed that" —

She is sobbing aloud; she can go no farther.

"You are only eating your heart out, Ida deary; you are giving your love to a man — It can't lead anywhere except to sorrow and regret. It is n't for yourself so much, or him; but supposing if — if, Ida, you marry and have children and they inherit the curse?"

"I know; I have thought it all out myself."

"You must not see him any more. I blame myself for this, very much. I knew it all before. I should n't have let it go on. You must — you must give him up, Ida dear."

She is so white, so limp, that I fear that she will faint. She clings to me convulsively now.

"I can't, father."

I steel my heart. I must be cruel. I must be harsh.

"You must give him up, Ida."

"I can't father; I can't. It will kill me."

"Ah, Ida."

I draw her closer, closer; our souls are locked in an embrace. I strive for self-control.

"You must give him up, Ida; it can lead nowhere, to nothing but disappointment, and regret, and a broken heart."

"But I will suffer it for his sake — anything!"

I love him more now — better than ever — I feel that he needs me more. I can't tell you why — I can't explain it — I feel more."

"Ah, Ida."

She hides her head on my breast and cries. I shall be lost in a minute. I must struggle on. I must be cruel, to be kind.

"But it must end some time, Ida dearest; and the longer you put the end off, the more distressing will it be for him and for you. And all the torment and suffering in the mean time — it is all for naught. You can never marry."

"I don't care about that; I don't care a bit about that, father. Just to be near him, to hear him talk, to listen to him, to do what he asks, to obey him. Father, father, I can't tell you how I long to go to him to-night — I should not have run away. I may have hurt him — that is what is paining me so."

Her love appalls me. Who could have thought her capable of such depth and intensity of passion?

"Listen, dearest, listen. God knows how it pains me to say all this, and how much rather, how many thousand times rather, I would leave it all unsaid. But supposing — no, it is n't supposing, it is real, it must come; the time, I mean, when he asks you to marry him, and you will have to say, 'no.' It will crush him and you. Go to him now, while there is time, when you ought to go and tell him. It will be very hard, awful hard — the hardest thing that any one ever has to do; but you

are a brave girl, and you will go — for his sake, and mine, and your mother's, and your own."

She gives me no answer. Her tears cease, she sobs no longer. Her face is drawn and white ; her breathing is deep and slow. Midnight has come. I have kissed her good-night. Still no answer.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE TISSUE OF DREAMS

ALL entreaty is without avail; Ida will never consent to give Adolph up. She remains steadfast and unshaken. Even mother's added persuasion has not served to tip the balance to the right or the left.

I have resolved to appeal to Adolph. I pay homage to his bravery and nobility; I am sure that he will deem no sacrifice that is made in her behalf too heroic. It is the same as if I were beseeching my own son to forsake, on account of some inherited defect, one whom he adored and I loved. I am the culpable one. I should have interfered long before acquaintanceship ripened into love. I shall visit Adolph this morning; it is mere madness to defer longer.

I found him occupied with his watches. He looked up contritely, as if alive to the fact that I had witnessed his shame.

How difficult it is to begin! He might divine the purpose of my errand and start the conversation himself. I discover that there is no possibility of this desire being fulfilled.

Unbidden I have laid my hat on the bench, seated myself, and drawn my chair up to his.

"My son," I began (the unusual form of address evoked a quick, searching glance of surprise), — "my son, Ida told me some time ago that she — that she esteemed you highly ; to be perfectly candid, she has confessed to me that she — that she loves you."

He faces me ; those sharp eyes bore through mine. His hand moves to the back of his head.

"I have concluded from different things which I have observed from time to time that you — that you are quite as deeply attached to her?"

I stated my declaration in the form of a question ; I waited for an answer.

"I am free to acknowledge, Mr. Wilson, that I am deeply attached to her."

His hands slip down in the depths of his pockets, his large head bends on his long neck towards his breast, hopelessly, resignedly, like a man who awaits an unavoidable blow.

I gather myself to make the decisive effort. "I don't wish to cause you any pain — heaven forbid that I should afflict you more willingly than her ! — but I pleaded with Ida half the night ; I begged ; I implored her — It has all been in vain. I come to ask your assistance. I am convinced, after a long deliberation, that it would be better if" —

He remains silent, staring as if he had not heard. A like shadow darkened Ida's face when I told her that she must surrender love to reason.

I feel my way, groping onward painfully. "She loves you deeper than I had any reason to suspect,

more than I thought it was in her nature to love ; but you will help me to — Adolph, there is always some one besides one's self to consider. You must look beyond yourselves. If you were to bring children into this world and they should inherit this — taste — this ” —

He speaks unexpectedly : —

“ I felt this was coming. I knew it last night. It is all as I forevisioned it. Give her up ? Give her up ? Do you know what this means, do you know what you ask, Mr. Wilson ? ”

“ Yes, I know. ”

“ You can't know. It seems to me as if I had been hanging on the edge of a cliff by my fingers, and the heavy foot of the world trampled on them ruthlessly to make me release my grasp and fall ; then she came and lifted me out of danger and helped me to regain my footing. Now you come to ask me to give her up, to let her hand go, and sink ? ”

He has arisen ; he stands against the bench, his hands clutching it nervously.

I went to him and laid both my hands on his shoulders.

“ You are a brave lad, God reward you ! God help all of us ! I could not love my own son more. I am far from blaming you or her ; you appealed to each other ; you could not help it, it was by the law of your natures. But it must be, Adolph. What can come of it ? Where will it all end ? You would n't want ” —

“ I understand ; I have considered all that ; I

should n't have let her; I should n't have permitted myself. It was wrong, I know it; but she has meant so much to me; she has made life so different. I deluded myself, perhaps. I felt sure that I might conquer it. If you knew how I fought against it, the terrible battle that has gone on in this room. How I have struggled for her sake and for mine!"

"Adolph, before it is too late, before your life is ruined, and hers — it must come some time — the sooner it does come, the more pain will you both be spared."

He reels slightly. Then he stands upright, away from the bench, his fists clenched as if he would strike an invisible enemy approaching to take him from her.

"I will do as you say. It is best. I have thought so myself. I have gradually been reaching self-control; I am positive that I shall attain it. But in such cases one dare not trust in faith. I would n't have you believe that I am selfish, that I only consider myself. I have thought of it often; I have been thinking of little else. I have considered it in every light. But after all it did look to me as if I had the right to be happy. But if the happiness is to be at her expense, when she might be better off without me — with another — I shall do as you say. Send her to me. She will never find out from me that a word has passed between us. You will let her speak to me — just this once — the last time, perhaps."

I endeavored to let him know how his noble

conduct has endeared him to me more than ever. I ventured to speak; the tears seemed to drop scalding from my eyes to my throat.

"I will send her," I faltered, leaving the room.

Ida found him as I had left him.

"Father just told me that you had something to say to me. I was just on the point of coming up to see you anyway."

"Yes, I asked him to send you to me," he answered, for once his eyes turning from her to the ground.

The dolefulness of voice and countenance hastened her intended apology: "I want to ask your forgiveness. I ran away yesterday. I did n't mean to. I was frightened—just for the moment; that was all. I turned to go back; but it was too late."

"Forgive you, forgive you? You ask my forgiveness, little saint!"

He draws her to him. Her head nestles on his shoulder, her arms sweep over his neck. It is an ocean, a storm, an upheaval of emotion that she is powerless to resist.

His mind runs up and down a hundred paths of explanation. On which is it best to lead her? Which is shortest? Which will cost her least pain? This tangle of mental roads confuses him; the words seem to arise of their own volition, without regard to his will.

"Ida, I am going away; I must leave the city soon."

She clings to him with all her strength. "You

are going away? Why? Where? For how long?" She apprehends but dimly the meaning of his assertion.

"I am going, dearest, because I think that it is the best thing that I can do for you and for me."

She stands aloof from him. "Father has asked you to go? He is sending you!"

"No, no, your father has said nothing to me."

"I shall go with you; I will not stay here without you. It will kill me." She rests in his arms again.

"Hush, Ida dear, you must be brave."

"But you have n't told me why you are going. Tell me — Why?"

A flare of intuition; her mind perceives the truth as by the flame of a torch that flickers a brief second in the darkness and dies. She prays his words may prove a horrid premonition — a phantom of her super-excited fancy.

"I have told you before — often. Why go over that sorry tale again? Let us spare each other the pain."

Then she knew that she had seen truly by the flare of the torch, and she shuddered.

"You shan't go away on that account. You will stay here and conquer yourself — and then — a man, a strong man, a man with your will and intelligence, can do anything. You will stay? You will try?"

"I have tried — you know how I have tried. It is useless."

"We will bear it together, then ; you will be stronger with me. We will rise or fall as one."

Affectionately his hands smooth her hair.

"Dear, true little soul, I can't permit that — I can't — I can't."

"But, Adolph dear, God surely would reward us for the struggle ; it would turn out right ; it must ! Have faith. Trust in yourself. Anything we endure together is better than being separated. Say that you will have me, that you won't go away."

They remained silent, breathless, clinging to each other. It was as if they feared that the next minute a boat would start which was to carry one away from the other, across the seas, forever.

"Ida, go, dear ; you will rob me of my will — I must not give way to myself — I can't permit it — go !"

He kisses her hand, her forehead, her eyes, her lips, her hair. He fears his strength. He stands aghast, seeing resolution slip through his relaxing grasp.

"Go, dearest ; go now — it is best."

She has left. On his bared hands and knees he would have crawled over the ground, strewn with bits of broken glass, to have kissed her outstretched hand.

## CHAPTER XX

### LAST WORDS

ADOLPH departs to-day ; he leaves for the East with a company of German actors. It makes but little difference to him, I fear, whither he goes or what he does. He appeared stolid and indifferent ; but he was kind to me even beyond his wont, as if his great disappointment had made him more sensitive to the misery of others. He had not a word to say about his prospects or his ambitions, not a complaint to utter about the wrecking of his most cherished desire ; yet he conversed cheerfully about my opera. " You might let me take it with me, Mr. Wilson," said he ; " I am going to visit the market for such products, and if it can be sold, the chances there are most favorable. I shall do my level best, you may rely upon that."

It was the staggering blow which good returns to evil. Perhaps I was wrong ; it might have been better to have let these young people work out their own destiny, trusting to Providence for their salvation. I have done what I thought best. Dear God, I am only poor, weak Thomas Wilson.

I grasped his hand warmly, and without the saying of a word, I delivered the missive which Ida had intrusted to me and left the room. In



the hallway I reproached myself for my weakness. A farewell, warm from the heart, came gushing to my lips. I hastened back; not daring to trust myself, I retraced my steps. Ah, that last clasp of hands conveyed all that I could say!

✓ Fearful lest it contain aught unmaidenly, Ida let me read her letter before she sealed it. Every sentence is burned in my memory.

DEAREST, — I have concluded that you were quite right when you said that it would be better not to see each other once more before your departure. I am afraid it would kill me to bid you good-by again. I could not realize that you were going away until now. It seemed impossible. I kept thinking that something would intervene to keep you here. It was just a childlike faith that because I needed you and wanted you, nothing could take you from me. But you are going to-day; you are going after all. Perhaps it is best for you, and I must make myself believe that it is best for me.

I am only a very, very simple little girl — I have told you that so often that if I tell it to you again you may deem me insincere — and you are so clever and so far superior to me that I may be suffering a deserved punishment for daring to aspire so high above me. Still you always declared that you saw much in me, and that my love meant so much to you, and that you never cared what I knew or what I did n't know; you loved me for my own sake, you used to say, and I believe that

is so much better than loving one for cleverness, or knowledge, or beauty, or anything that is part of one and yet not one. And your love made me so happy and proud that my life has been quite different since you entered into it.

I remember nearly all the words you have spoken to me, and they will keep repeating themselves to me when you are gone. It will be like having you near me to recall them; for I shall thus be able to hold in mind the places and the days where we were together, and when you told me what was in your heart.

I am not used to writing my own thoughts, and I find it strange and awkward, and not at all like talking to you, and I hope you understand what I mean. Besides, dearest Adolph, I might pour out my soul to you, and tell you again and again how I love you, and how I shall think of you always and every second of the time; but I dare not give way to my feelings like that; for it will only cause grief and make your parting harder for both of us to bear. What I want most to say, I cannot; and that is what makes this letter so difficult to write. But you will know, will you not?

In the unhappiest days that I have ever known I felt that I would be better at once, if I could only cry; and that is just how I feel now, if I could only tell all that I want to, I would be better at once; but for some reason I cannot. I know that you love me, and that you were sincere and honest in all that you told me, and I am sure that you would not go away if you did not love me as you do, and

that makes me love you still more and makes your parting all the more bitter. I might write to you often and tell you just how I regard you, but it would be the severest punishment in the world to bare my soul to you and yet be aware that I could never see you again or have you for my own. And if I force myself to write a cold and matter-of-fact letter, why that would be as depressing for you to read as for me to write ; so it may be wisest and best to hope on in silence. How do you feel about that, dearest ?

After all, it is no more than right that I do just what you think is right, and what I know, down in the depths of my heart, look at it as I may, is right and most noble. Otherwise, if I listened to myself in my mad moments, I might be tempted to — oh, I could n't be strong enough to give you up. No, I am sure that I could n't. And if it is just that we should have each other, and if God means that we are to have each other, I am certain that we shall.

Adolph dear, don't think that I ever blamed you, or found fault with you, or loved you less on account of your fault ; for God knows and father knows and mother, I have told them so often, that I should be happy to help you bear all the misery and wretchedness it causes you. You will always know that I am praying and wishing and hoping for you. You will win success and be famous some day, I have never doubted that ; and then you will see how much all this suffering has helped you, and how much better it has made you. I shall always

be proud of you and take pleasure in your success, just as much as if I had won it myself; for it would be the same thing as winning it myself.

And there is so much to say, and so much that I want to say and that perhaps I ought to say, but I leave it unsaid — I think it best so. I have been trying to write good-by down, but I can't; so will say good-night, and I am sure that before long the time will come when I shall say good-morning. And if I did n't believe that, I could n't live.

IDA.

It could not have been an hour after my departure from Adolph that Herr Vogel, by no means woeful beyond expression, left a missive from his son to Ida in my keeping. I found her, half concealed behind the chintz curtain, gazing through the front window at an express wagon which had drawn up closely to the curb. A trunk, bound with roping, was lifted on the vehicle. Adolph and his father took seats beside the driver. The former turned slowly and sadly to look up at the window. Seeing no one, he faced forward again. I could read dejection traced on the lines of his shrugged shoulders and stooping back.

I was standing just behind my daughter. I could hear the throb of her longing, aching heart. Quickly the wagon drove beyond the range of our vision. Totally oblivious to my presence, Ida turned from the window; I enfolded her in my outstretched arms. Her eyes fastened on mine with an expression of infinite entreaty and beseeching,

as if I were a magician whose beck and nod had the potency to recall him. Needles ran through my heart ; I riveted my eyes on the carpet. Willingly would I remain dumb for the rest of my life if I might speak the one right word of comfort now !

Her small hands grow like ice to my burning palms ; and she half sobs, half pants : “ He did n’t even — come — to bid me — good-by ! ”

“ You know, Ida,” said I soothingly, “ that you forbade that — you suggested that it might be better if he did n’t.”

“ He might have come, anyway,” she moaned. A dropping tear wets her eyelash ; her hand grows warmer.

In my perturbation I had forgotten the letter consigned to me. “ He did come to say good-by, Ida.”

“ Why did n’t you call me ? Where was I ? ” she groaned.

“ Hiding behind the curtain.”

“ You might ” —

I waved the letter aloft ; comprehending, she fairly snatched it from me. She ran into her room with the boon and locked the door. Late that night she leaned over my shoulder and read again : —

DEAREST IDA, — Your letter was so simple and frank and genuine (just such a letter as I should expect from you and from no one else but you) that I felt it was too beautiful to be forgotten ; so I

have memorized it word for word, as one does a poem that one wishes to have with one always. An accident might happen to the paper, and all would be lost; but now, even if the letter should be burned, the words are mine forever. And besides being simple and frank and genuine, dearest Ida, it was sensible, and I know better than any one (save you) how hard it is to govern one's self by reason at such a time as this.

How proud of you I am, and how thankful and happy to have had the qualities which won the love of a woman like you! I think ever so much more of myself now, and I respect myself ever so much more. And you and your love have awakened in me a standard, an ideal, by which I shall always strive to shape my life. I shall live every day, and every hour of each day, and every minute of each hour, as if it were all a preparation for the consummation of our loves. Even if I should grow despondent and discouraged, and regard this idea as visionary, vain, and idle, still will I try to rule myself by it; for the fact that you have loved me will ever inspire me to keep those good qualities alive which you thought to find in me.

Yes, I understand what you wished to say and could not say. I read between the lines, and I heard your beating heart; and the letter is thrice dear for the bravery and restraint that dictated its womanly sentiment. I know, too, that you will read mine in that same spirit with which I read yours. But I run on and on, and I say nothing; and there is so much to be said that I am con-

fused by the tumult of my thoughts, and I am afraid that when the last words are penned, I shall have forgotten the very things I wished most to write. Brave, tender, dear little soul, you are quite right — it is best not to correspond ; although I feel even now that the temptation will come to us more than once, and that we shall have to struggle to resist it.

Forget you ? Does one struck blind forget the miracle and wonder and infinite pleasure of sight ? If one is born blind, one knows but by hearsay how divine a gift is sight ; had I never known you or cared for you, had you not become a part of my life — and the very best part — I should have no means of knowing the difference between existing without you and living near you. You meant so much to me ; you wrought such a change in me. It is as if I had been sitting in a dark room all my life, and suddenly you came into the darkness bearing a lighted lamp, and then I saw the things that I had but dimly descried. Now you have gone, and the lamp is out ; and I sit in the darkness again, praying that you will come back to me again. And the message you left — the kind, endearing, loving, soul-inspiring words you spoke — will remain with me forever, dear light of my life.

Nearly every traveler that passes through this world is given the three priceless gems of faith, hope, and love before he reaches the milestone which marks the beginning of the second quarter of his journey. Here knowledge demands that the traveler pay the jewel of faith for toll before he

enters its realms. He hesitates. The running waters and the green pastures and the shade of the tree-sheltered nooks shimmer before his tired eyes, promising rest to his weary soul and drink to his feverish thirst. He gives the jewel of faith to knowledge. When he halts at the milestone which marks the third quarter of his journey, fatigued unto death and parched unto burning, — for water and shade, he soon discovered, were but the illusive mirage of his cheated fancy, — he finds knowledge awaiting him again to extort the jewel of hope. This toll the traveler pays without wavering and without considering, because life has taught him that the jewel of hope loses half of its value when the jewel of faith is gone. Cozzened out of faith, robbed of hope, he cries out in despair, and throwing himself by the wayside, he refuses to move farther. Then life whispers to him: ‘Behold the jewel of love, be of good cheer and go bravely on thy way until the end.’ And the traveler looks, and lo! the jewel of love is thrice brilliant since the other two jewels have been lost. He has learned its true value now.

Dear heart, you understand my poor, flimsy parable, do you not? Though faith and hope are gone, love clings to me still, and it is greater than these; for it comprises them both. I live for you, I struggle for you. If I fall, it will be with your name on my lips. Heaven bless you and tend you and care for you; may your guardian angel never let his vigilance rest — may he be as jealous of your welfare and happiness as

ADOLPH.



## CHAPTER XXI

### VOGEL'S COURTSHIP

THE last chapter anticipated things somewhat. Before Adolph's departure several incidents of importance to the tenement happened. Ann married the shoemaker, Jan Zwiefka; and, if that climax can be capped, Vogel married the fortune-teller. I spoke with greater wisdom than I knew when I said that accident is the surest matrimonial agent in the world, and that one marriage often leads to another.

Jan won Ann's love with a potato. He prescribed that she carry a raw potato in her dress as a cure for the rheumatism from which she had suffered so much and so long. The vegetable evidently affected her imagination, for she no longer complains of the dread evil. The bulb has turned black and hard; Jan claims that the rheumatism has been absorbed by it. This is the first time that I have heard of a rheumatic potato. In my passion for medicine I must not forget my interest in love.

Ann payed Jan frequent visits to let him know how she progressed, and Jan called on Ann with equal assiduity to convince himself that he progressed with her progression. When Ann joy-

fully announced that she was completely recovered, Jan complained that he had never been so ill. He was suffering from the pangs of love unrequited; Ann was the only doctor who could cure him. One good turn deserves another: Ann cured Jan.

The shoemaker has refused to stick to his last. He is devoting himself exclusively to the practice of medicine. In one sense, at least, marriage has had an elevating influence on Jan — he has moved from the basement up to Ann's rooms on the second. From the street you can see the large sign, "Dr. Jan Zwiefka, Faith Healer." The health authorities cannot interfere with any man who cures by faith. Jan discovered this before he pinned his faith to the business. He bears visible signs of prosperity — he wears a white shirt every day, and his hair and beard are always neatly combed and trimmed.

The neighborhood is thickly plastered with his advertisements. He who runs must read. His circulars are unique; they are the one new thing under the sun.

Dr. Jan Zwiefka  
The Polish Wizard!  
The last descendant of the first Polish King!  
The long lost art of curing revealed to him

#### IN A DREAM!

He cures without medicines. Try his remedies.  
Sickness is only an exhalation. He catches it.  
Look out for quacks. Consult the Wizard!  
Health is easy. First visit free.

I conclude that his practice is growing from the fact that in nearly every house that I enter, either a lemon or an onion or a potato occupies the coign of vantage. I fear that an increase of his popularity will mean a decrease of his patients, in more senses than one.

Vogel's courtship was more romantic. I have an inkling, however, that the fortune-teller succumbed to her fit of jealous rage against Ann rather than to the fascination exerted over her by the Herr. I believe, too, that the example set by the doctor encouraged Vogel; if a shoemaker could win a bride, why could not a cabinet-maker? Vogel never doubted his irresistibility for a second. He labored under the delusion that the madame was affluent, or that she could easily win fortune.

When he heard of Jan's engagement, he immediately invested in a rose. Surely he could risk a rose to gain a garden. He curled the stem of the flower in the crown of his hat, and betook himself to his fair lady with a heart that was anything but faint.

The black cats were playing about the fringe of the madame's skirts, the parrot was cursing or praying in Dutch (Vogel knew not which), and the madame was sewing. It was a scene of domestic felicitude to delight the lone widower.

He removed his hat, carefully holding the crown downwards, and perched himself on one foot. He felt uncomfortable; he was unable to rub his hands; his volubility failed him. There is no rose without its thorns.

"You vas" — Ah, it was no use; he must rid himself of the rose first.

"I have you dis rose bought, a token mein esteem von. Would de madame, de qveen von de fortune-tellers, accept him? I would like to bring you a garden von roses mit (you vill send de cats away, eh?), den would you be de grand rose in de garden, und de oder roses would bow der heads."

Vogel paused; he could not recall the rest of the speech that he had prepared. The madame smiled encouragingly. He twisted his hands. The lost speech mounted to his lips.

"I hav you a rose von vood carved made. De rose vill die, but de vood rose he vill not die. He vill be mit you forever, like mein dought. De rose nature von, he vill die like de dought vich I for oder vimens hav," he ended snickeringly.

The madame held the rose to the broad nostrils of her flat nose. Whether he came to borrow, or to pay reverence, or to tempt fortune, it was all equally sweet to her.

"Are you quite sure that you mean all this, Herr Vogel?"

"Ef I mean him? Vy you ask?" His ardor cooled, he looked disgusted. The madame half repented. She said, rather meekly, with a shy glance, her face as much *sub rosa* as the rose would permit: —

"Somebody told me that I resembled a smoky chimney when I sit in this wrapper."

"Somebody hav said dat? Such a man I hav

no use for. He should be vipped ; he should not be allowed your company in."

"But it was you who said it ; you know that you did," she giggled.

"I hav said it ? Vas it bossible ? Ach, I vas mein mind absent von. I make fun ; I like sometimes to schoke."

He sat down, and moved the chair nearer to hers ; she did not draw back.

"I hav mein shadow in de schurch seen, but I did not die."

"No, I thought it would be too bad to have a man like you die ; so I changed your fortune."

"But I never vill again in a schurch go."

"Not even with me ? "

Vogel scrutinized her, flared red, and darted from the room ; the proposal was too abrupt ; there must be something wrong with a woman that would have him that readily.

The next visit he came armed with two roses. The madame received his advances coldly. Vogel sued amorously ; his fervor waxing as her passion waned. Three roses signaled his third approach. The madame could not resist the steady onslaught and the deadliness of the weapons. She consented to be his.

"You vill scharm de cards, und ve vill be rich," he suggested immediately after his proposal, "und I vill not vork, eh ? You vill at home sit und scharm de cards, und I go out vat de cards say to do ? Ach, I vas happy like de little bee in de clover. Ve vill hav a grand palace — und I make

him grand carvings mit. In every room der vill a grand mantel be, und ve hav de ceilings vood von, und I carve dem de face von you mit."

Pictures quite other than those of carved mantels and palaces and likenesses of herself in wood filled the madame's fancy; they were plain, ordinary photographs from every-day life; and the most prominent in the series were those of Vogel starting to work early each morning with his tools, and returning each night with his wages. She knew his ability as a carver, and she meant that he should carve to the best and fullest extent of his ability. Meanwhile she let him indulge his visions to the top of his bent. She was tired of predicting fortunes for others; it was high time that she should enjoy a fortune of her own.

A day or two after their nuptials she changed her fairy wand for a rod of iron; and she wielded it over poor, deluded Vogel with the strength of an Amazon. She aroused him from a sound sleep with: —

"Come, it is time to get to work."

"To vork! I should to vork go ven I have a fortune-teller married? I dought ven I you hav married dat I vould not hav to vork."

"I thought just that when I married you; come, get to work."

"You vill not mein fortune tell?"

"Yes, if you work. Fortune never can come to those who don't work, that is the funny part about it."

"Dat you should hav me before told."

"I thought you knew about it."

"Anybody can fortune hav if he vill like a slave vork. De trick vas to hav fortune vork mit-out."

He collected his tools, mumpering and wondering if he had good grounds for a divorce. He returned after the absence of half an hour. It was the same story—a combination of evil portents had crossed his path. The madame was furious, but restraining her temper, she remained calm to all outward appearances.

"I will remove the bad luck," she said, and straightway fell to mumbling incoherently in a language that neither Vogel nor herself nor anybody else could understand.

"There, the three white horses cannot harm you; I have charmed them. Come, now, hurry, and you can get to work in time yet. I will go the whole of the way to the shop with you, and then they will surely be powerless."

Vogel's small, greenish eyes were ablaze with an indignation that was far from righteous.

"You mean me to tell dat you can scharm dree vite horses at vonce?"

"Certainly, I can charm a dozen; it's on the same principle as charming one."

"Excuse me ven I don't"—

"What," she interrupted, "do you dare to doubt my power?"

She frowned so threateningly that he did not dare to dare that he doubted.

"If you do," she went on, arising in austere dignity, "I will put the seventh curse of the seventh daughter on you."

"Vat vas dat, de seventh curse de seventh daughter von?"

"You wish to see it? Well, you shall. If you are blinded from it, don't blame me. It is your wish!" She stalked over to the window, and pulled the heavy shade down with a jerk.

"Not now, please," he begged, "you vill mit me come to de shop, eh?"

Thus the madame's method has cured Vogel's madness. He has become an exemplary husband—he has not the courage to be otherwise. Now and then, it is true, he forgets his cares in the cup; but the madame raises no objection so long as he does not sink all of his work and most of his wages in the same place.

This tyranny has grown irksome beyond endurance to Vogel's artistic temperament; it murders all individuality, all expression of self. Twice has he confided to Malachy that when the right opportunity presents itself he will run away—the most expedient and least scandalous method of securing a divorce, he claims. The madame has suspected this intention (Vogel's tongue will be his hangman yet), and she has nipped it in the bud of its inception. Tearfully Vogel has bewailed to Malachy that his wife has the power to see him through unlimited space, to summon him back by the repetition of an incantation, though he be separated from her by the measureless seas. Vogel warns the whole world to beware of women endowed with the gift of making home attractive from too great a distance.



## CHAPTER XXII

### ALONE IN THE WORLD

"THOMAS WILSON, Teacher of Instrumental Music," is the sign that now hangs from my door. Thus far I have secured two pupils. Malachy was the first to respond; he brought his daughter Nora to me, asseverating that she was a genius in the music line. He predicted a brilliant future for her as a pianist. When I declared that it was impossible to divine her musical talent from the shape of her ears, he became glum at once, and seemed to regret that he had not sought an abler instructor. With perseverance she may learn to play the simplest airs without the making of ear-splitting mistakes; but I have my doubts.

My second pupil is one by the name of Cronenfeld. He is a barber by trade, brimful of sentimentality, and violently in love. He is ambitious to master the flute. He has been told that the tender passion of woman is peculiarly susceptible to the ravishing notes of that instrument. He has a modicum of aptitude for music, and a minimum, approaching nil, of patience. Cronenfeld is cursed by the idea that one should be proficient in the flute in six or eight lessons — six if one is a good pupil; eight if one is not born for the art.

"It is quite true," said I, "that they should, but then they can't."

"Well, then," replies he, "the teachers are no good!"

He is in my debt for four lessons. I asked him, last time, very meekly, if he could not let me have one of the two dollars which he owed me. "Certainly," answered he, "as soon as I find out whether or not I have learned anything."

"My dear Mr. Cronenfeld," replied I, "I am not responsible for your progress; all that I can do is to teach to the best of my experience and knowledge, the rest depends upon you. If you advance, or if you don't advance — in either case I give you my time."

"Yes," retorts he, "but if I buy an article at the store and it don't suit, I can get my money back. It ought to be the same with a music lesson; if they are no good, there is no reason why I should pay for them."

"It ought to be," rejoined I, "but then it is n't, and I must insist upon having my money."

At this he grew angry. When he regained his serenity of temper, he inquired if I could not wait until he discovered how his fair one danced to his music. I refused. Finally he besought me to take a part of my pay in trade. I shook my head. Begrudgingly he handed me fifty cents. I shall give him up; he is too argumentative for a pupil.

Mother and Ida implore me to continue. In a short time, they opine, I shall have a clientele beyond anything ever known. I agree with them.

Such odd things as the people hereabouts come to be taught: one wishes to learn the mouth organ, another the jew's-harp; a third the accordion. "But your sign reads instrumental music," is their invariable response to my positive refusal.

If I were willing to accept my fee in kind, I might find patronage that would allow no leisure; but I am ever offered articles for which I can find no use in this world nor in the next, if the latter be as unutilitarian as I have imagined it.

It is of no avail, I cannot make my livelihood out of music. I must seek another field, and yet what? This ceaseless strain and trial that give me no pause will drive me mad. And the worst worry of all is the worry of appearing not to be worried, not to let mother or Ida suspect my dejection and despair. Mathilda's savings are disappearing with the rapidity of water down hill. A bank account is like a paper bag; prick it with a pin, and it goes to pieces with a bang. I wish sometimes that I were a savage, then I might go on the street without being ashamed of having no clothes fit to wear.

Jane is the court of last resort, but how I detest making the appeal. Her visits have gradually become less and less frequent. Mother's calls upon her and mine have found welcome in the same gradually decreasing proportion. It is not what she says but what she does not say that pains us. A week ago we left there feeling decidedly uncomfortable: our daughter did not see fit to introduce us to her fashionable friends. Yet she has volun-

tarily made us several no inconsiderable gifts of money (I hardly know what would have become of us had she not); but the lucre has always burned my hand like so much live coal. It is n't assistance we need, mother and I, half so much as sympathy. I am well aware that at bottom Rounds is entirely to blame. He greets us as if we were two stowaways that had no business on his ship: there is plenty of room in the surrounding ocean for such as we. Jane has told me (kindly and delicately, let me make haste to add) that Mr. Rounds does n't like relatives; not us in particular, but relatives in general. He has parents in the East to whom he sends money regularly to keep them where they are. He is ashamed of his humble origin. He will never forgive his veins for not flowing with blue blood.

"Jane," asked I bluntly, the last time that I was there, "are n't you ashamed of your parents?"

She stammered, she blushed, she bent her gaze on the floor.

"Come back into the dining-room, dad," she whispered hoarsely. She shut both doors and turned the keys, and throwing her arms around me, she began to cry like a child, kissing me with the affection and the sincerity of the days of yore, before the artificial had crushed the natural out of her life.

"Dad, dad, I'm not happy here; I'm not at all happy here. But I've started it, and there is no turning back. They will laugh at me if I do, and besides I can't. How often I have wished myself

back in the tenement and the store ! They jeer behind my back, I can feel it ; even the servants. If I could only go back to where you don't have to care for what you are, or who your parents are, or for anything or anybody ! Forgive me, dad dear, forgive me."

My mind runs backward swiftly and jumps forward with a spring ; in the run and the jump I comprehend all ; for the moment I pity Jane and her sorrow more than Ida and hers. I cry, too.

"I did want to introduce you, and I love you, and I am proud of my dear old dad ; but that Mrs. Murdock is always and forever talking about one's family in such a snobbish, insinuating way, just as if we did n't know that her mother kept a grocery shop at one time. And she is such a gossip ! Oh, dad, these people are so different from the folks over at the tenement ; you don't understand, you don't understand !"

"I understand now, Jane dear, I understand. And I do look shabby and unpresentable, I know that I do. It's all right. I should n't have said a word about it."

"It's my fault if you do look shabby. I have been a greedy, selfish, negligent girl. But it is n't all my fault ; my husband is good to me in lots of things ; he is very free and liberal with his money in many ways, and very close and calculating in others. He always finds out when I have been over to the tenement, and he scolds frightfully about it. He says that it is no wonder that the money g-o-e-s."

Yes, blood is thicker than water. Our daughter may go clad in silks and we may slouch about in rags, but she is our daughter still ; the rest is but a question of cloth and clothes.

The doorbell rang ; a second afterwards the butler tapped. That butler is a crawling serpent, with the head of the devil.

"I will have to go now, dad," said Jane, composing herself with a celerity that I should have thought impossible anywhere off the stage ; "it's one of the fashionables. That's the way it goes here from morning until night. But just wait, and things will shape themselves, and it will turn out all right in the end."

I shamble from the house far happier than when I crept thither ; although his satanic and serpentine majesty, the butler, I have no doubt, was grinning and crawling behind my back.

Jibing the heels of Jane's repentance, a new suit came to the house for me and a new dress for mother. We found money in the pockets — just as in the fairy tales — save that the money was actually there.

Our prodigal daughter has favored us with her presence more regularly of late ; and her conversation is less restricted to her own doings and her neighbors' sayings and more concerned with our narrow family interests. On the whole the outlook is brighter and better than it has been for a long while. Mother laughed to-night. This may be a very insignificant fact to chronicle ; but it is the first time that I have heard Mathilda laugh

since Jane's wedding, when we danced together. Even Ida smiled to see her laugh ; and that is the first time that she has been in a laughing mood since Adolph went away.

Ida is my chief anxiety, the consuming worry that harrows the night of my life with woe inexpressible. A pebble is pressing in her throat, and a stone is weighing in her heart, but she neither moans nor complains. She lives on for mother's sake and mine ; her interests in life are negative. To sit here and watch the torturing strangulation day after day, to be impotent to ease or aid — may you never endure agony like it.

I reproach myself again and again. It might have been better to have given her to him, trusting in God for good results. I may have acted wisely but not too well. I must admit that there is a selfish and secret pleasure in this remorse. Empty! Empty! Empty!

"Mother," asked I late one night, when the lights were out, "has Ida ever spoken to you about Adolph?"

"Never, Thomas."

"Have you ever spoken to Ida about Adolph?"

"Yes, once ; but she turned her face away as if she had been struck on the cheek, then she looked at me in silence as if begging me to never mention his name again."

Mother has aged perceptibly ; her hair is white as the paper on which I write. Her sight is dim ; she has ceased reading herself, and asks me to read aloud to her. She does not hear well ; she

no longer recognizes me by my step. She is fast growing absent-minded ; her tenacious memory is failing. I find myself no longer measuring life by years, but by months. The hour is fast drawing nigh when each second shall have its value.

When mother went to market to-day, Ida and I had a serious talk.

"Ida," I opened the conversation, "mother is getting very old ; I fear she has not many more years to spend with us. I long to have her pass her last days in comfort, amid every luxury that money can buy. I think that Jane should be willing — she ought to be rejoiced to have mother make her home with her. Rounds may not like it, but" —

"But," interrupts Ida, "Jane ought not to care whether Rounds likes it or not ; it is her own mother who has done so much and sacrificed so much for her all these years ; many times she has deprived herself that Jane might have ; and now she should be perfectly willing to put up with a little unpleasantness for her sake ; and that is all it will amount to, a little unpleasantness."

"I fear Rounds is very severe with her at times."

"Even so, father, she should suffer anything for mother's sake."

"I shall speak to Jane about it at once. I have intended to do it for a month past. I will put it off no longer ; I will do it to-day."

"Father, don't you ever think of yourself ?"

"What makes you ask that ?"



"Are n't you deserving of a good home, too?"

"This is a fine home; no man could want a better home. I am fortunate in having such a good home and such a daughter as my Ida."

She grew wistful. "Mother will never consent to go alone; she will never in the wide world leave without you."

"But we can't leave you; one of us must stay here."

She held peace for a minute before she remarked:—

"It would be better, father, if you went with mother. I can give you so very little; much less than one of your age needs. We haven't had butter on the table for weeks; and we rarely have meat now. The strain on me—I don't like to complain—has been too great; I am not sure whether I can hold out this way much longer. If I am alone, I will not have to work one third as hard."

A stitch of pain draws the walls of my heart together.

"Oh, Ida, forgive me; I have been a selfish, weak, old man. I never thought of you, not once; just of myself and my own comfort. If I had been a man, I would have gone to the poorhouse rather than have you toil as you have been toiling."

She dropped her work on the floor, and perched herself on my knee, twining her arms about me as she has not done, for some reason, since Adolph left.

She starts to speak, but lapses into quiet, then she says:—

"You are n't selfish, not one bit; you are the best and kindest old man that ever lived, or that will ever live; there has never been one like you, and there never will be one like you. I shan't have you reproach yourself! I wish that I had as many hands as fingers, that I might use them all for you and mother; but I have only one pair, and they are getting slower, I fear."

At this point mother returned from the market, and the exchange of confidences ceased. To interrupt some conversations is like breaking a gossamer thread that nature spins — not all the king's horses nor all the king's men can put the thread together again.

I expected Jane this afternoon, but she did not come. Towards evening I betook myself to her house; for I wished to put my resolution into execution, being an old man and vacillating, before it lost vitality from being held in abeyance too long.

I found Jane flurried; turbulent as a waterpool; her thought foaming and bubbling in every direction. Rounds has sold his house and lot to advantage — he never sells anything to disadvantage. The world is his bargain. He has already purchased a more pretentious house in a more select neighborhood. Jane confided how many thousand dollars it cost, — she extended the confidence three times running, in fact, — but the thousands were so many that they have escaped my memory. Society holds Jane spellbound, as a snake is said (I don't believe it myself) to fascinate a bird by fixing its reptilian eyes upon the helpless victim.

When the agitation of the whirlpool subsided, I launched forth boldly with my purpose. I concluded my plea with:—

“I am more than contented myself; it’s only a better home for mother that I care about.”

“Why, mother was here yesterday and said exactly the same thing about you!” exclaimed she.

“Can it be true!” I cried.

Only to think that my own wife could deceive me thus basely!

I hastened to impart the conversation that had passed between Ida and myself, stating how unjustified I was to lean upon one so overladen for support.

“It’s a very painful position to be in, Jane, to come to one’s own daughter and ask for food and shelter and raiment; but Ida, — oh, I can’t let Ida drudge her life away to provide a home for me. It’s criminal!”

Jane’s better nature asserted itself at once; it always does in a crisis, lying dormant when the level of circumstance is smooth. No daughter of ours could be narrow hearted. We are not responsible for the meretricious veneering — that is the work of the world.

Jane declared that she would find a place, and a good place, for mother and me in her new home, or else she would not move into it. No matter what her husband’s views, she would have her own way.

“And if he won’t,” she affirmed, “he will have

to seek another wife, without a mother and father, that's all."

Late to-night, after we retired, I said to mother: —

"I went to see Jane."

"I thought you were going down-town?"

"I changed my mind. To be frank, Mathilda, I went to see her about giving you a home."

"Thomas, you did n't!"

"Yes, I did."

"You should be ashamed of yourself to do it without asking my permission in the first place. Don't you ever think of yourself?"

"Jane told me that you were there a day ago to beg a home for me. Aren't you ashamed of yourself not to have asked my permission in the first place? Don't you ever think of yourself?"

"That's different; that's an old woman's prerogative."

"Am I not old enough to have a prerogative or two, Mathilda?"

"Yes, but" —

There is no argument strong enough to oppose to one of mother's "buts." When she says "but," I know that the Supreme Court has handed down its decision.

"Your going to see Jane about me and my going to see Jane about you has ended in the result that we are going there together to live for the rest of our lives."

"And leave Ida here alone? Not much! One of us must stay. I will never give my consent to

deserting Ida. Thomas, a daughter always needs her mother more. Besides, I am strong and well ; I don't need comfort and care half so much as you do. Now if you " —

" But we must go, Mathilda ; neither of us can stay here. We have no choice. Ida informed me to-day that she could stand the strain no longer. She fears that the excessive work will undermine her health. I have been under the impression all the while that it has been Adolph."

A low groan bursts from mother's lips ; she strives in vain to suppress it. Clearer and more expressive than all the words in the dictionary, it said, " Ida does n't want us either ; Ida does n't want us either."

" Thomas, hold my hand." (I had been holding it.)

" Yes, mother."

" You are there ? I am not dreaming ?"

" No, mother."

" We have not much farther to walk up the road, not very long now."

" No, mother."

" We will travel it together, bravely, until the end."

" Yes, mother."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE NEW HOME

MAGNIFICENT, opulent, gorgeous, lavish, are the adjectives which are associated in my mind with the conception of our new home. They have painted the lily every color of the rainbow, streaks of gold predominating. They have adorned the peacock's tail with the plumage of the parrot. To have passed at a bound, without transition, from our hovel to this palace gives one the impression that a magician was busy behind the scenes, and that an angry shake of his wand will crumble this splendor to dust. I am in constant dread lest the whole come tumbling down over our heads like a house of cards in a zephyr.

Mother is entrancing in her black gown, her folded kerchief, and her white cap; while I present an eminently respectable appearance in my black suit. Surely we should satisfy Rounds's craving for ancestors; mother and I are ancestral enough to have glided in from five or six generations back.

Our apartment is located just off the landing of the second flight of stairs. It is precisely the place for old people, quiet and secluded. Here hang the crayons of my son-in-law's family. He

would have consigned their likenesses to the fire without a prick of conscience had not superstition restrained him ; so he compromised by hanging them on our walls — a disposition that is next best to burning. I have grown accustomed to the sordid, vulgar countenances, and they disturb my dreams but rarely now. Several pieces of decrepit furniture whet my curiosity. I marvel how they came in here. They must have stolen a march by the back door, like the butcher and the grocer. I am glad the horsehair lounge escaped detection ; it detracts so little from our comfort. We boast of two landscapes, the original of which were never on sea or land.

Since our arrival the weather has been bleak, blustering, and wild, the leonine half of March being rampant. Storm, rain, and hail have thwarted our resolves to visit Ida ; we have not the hardihood to venture out of doors. Nevertheless, we manage to write to her at least once a day, the contents of each communication declaiming our ecstasy with the new order and the life luxurious, lamenting that her absence should make the one rift in the perfect lute. These prevarications bite deeper and deeper in the flesh of truth ; and although mother is deluded with the idea that she is deceiving me, I that I am outwitting her, both of us that we are drawing white wool over Ida's eyes, the verity is, as we shall have courage to confess by and by, that we are downright miserable. This is not home ; it is a charitable institution ! I pine away for Ida, the old ways, the homely surround-

ings. And we have been here but a week. When the weeks stretch out to months, and the months drag along wearily to years!—

We are tolerated, not entertained. Jane may pretend and affirm all she likes, but a frown from Mrs. Grundy annoys her more than all our smiles can gratify. Horrible Mrs. Grundy — she should never have been born!

If guests are invited for the evening, mother and I are relegated to the second table, dining just after the family and just before the servants. Rounds holds that children should be seen and not heard; that those in their second childhood should be neither seen nor heard. When he sees me passing up the stairs, he stares at me with an air that snaps, "That's right, go on up; that's where you belong."

He is fond of discussing questions of economics, loud enough to be overheard, that are sufficiently wide in range to include us; such as, Why young men should save for the exigencies of old age, Why charity tends to pauperization and crime. Not once since we have been his dependents has he inquired after mother's health or mine. He takes it for granted that our health is necessarily good, being poor and having naught else; or he does n't care a straw one way or the other. I am inclined to foster the latter belief. Nevertheless, he might put the question to assume a politeness which he has not.

He shocked me with a friendly greeting this morning. No, he did n't mistake me for the butler.



That dignitary would have scorned the condescension. Rounds is afraid of the butler ; he has been with the best families, and has an eye that is unerring for etiquette. He shakes his head superciliously when mother and I are at table. He presumes on a finer familiarity with knife and fork.

"Mitchell," queried I, the other day at breakfast, "did you ever work for an undertaker?"

"No, sir," he answered ; "why do you ask?"

"You always seem to me to be in deadly fear of waking a corpse."

"Thank you, sir," he replied.

Adolph's mask was never so ironical as Mitchell's.

Jane holds the first of her series of receptions this afternoon. The carpet is laid across the sidewalk, the awning is erected ; a colored man of lofty proportions stands ready to deliver the guests as they dismount from their carriages. The lion rampant has ceded place to the lamb recumbent ; mother and I shall catch the lamb by the forelock, avoid the din and confusion of the house, and call on Ida.

We were wending our way through the hall, heedful not to brush against the palms and the clusters of roses (I was sorely tempted to steal the most gorgeous one for Ida), when Jane's voice floated over the banister. She besought us to return, if we were going out, before the company arrived, unless we cared to attend the reception and meet her friends. Her tones implied that a negative reply to the last suggestion would not be unacceptable.

Perplexed, we slunk back to our den, bitterly regretting that we had not carried out our intention. We might have stayed with Ida overnight. We sat in silence. Mother begged me to play a cheerful and lively air to drive away the depressing gloom of her lowering spirits. It was a ruse, I am sure, to divert my attention from the study of her countenance. I took my flute from the case (its notes have never echoed through this house), and I began the favorite aria of my opera. I was fairly in the middle of it when the butler poked his smug face through the door. "Please, sir, Mr. Rounds sent me up to ask if you would n't be kind enough to stop that infernal racket."

I dropped the flute on the floor. "Are those your words or Mr. Rounds's?" My blood ebbed scarlet.

"I always deliver messages as they are dictated, sir."

Opening the door, I walked to the head of the stairs and glanced down. My son-in-law stood leaning against the high post of the broad landing of the first floor.

"What did he say?" I heard him ask.

"He asked me if that was what you said, or if they were my words," was the reply.

"Paupers!" he sneered. "They will command us to send messages to them on a silver plate next."

The babble of voices and the rustle of gowns became louder and louder. The noise subsided when the orchestra began its entertainment. I

left the door open that we might enjoy the rapturous music ; it was an air from the Russian composer Moszkowski which I had never heard performed, although I have played it myself frequently.

The men's wraps were laid in the room opposite ours. Rounds was coming up the stairs with one of his friends ; the latter peeped in our room, saw us, and smiled. The friend sought his hat and coat ; Rounds tiptoed back and shut the door softly.

"Thomas," said mother firmly and composedly, "if we are not fit to be seen, then we are not fit to be here."

"You took the words from my lips, mother."

Mrs. Cummings, the housekeeper, has cultivated the habit of coming into our room of an evening to play cards. She is a tall, stately, high-breasted woman, with a nose that ruins the dignity of her carriage — it has the exact shape of a thumb with two nostrils bored in the tip. She is inquisitive, and prides herself on an intimate knowledge of the private history of all the leading families ; and she is ever ready to tell what I imagine the leading families have expurgated from the second edition of their annals. She has a natural proclivity for discovering skeletons in closets. She makes this branch of sociology her specialty. Every closet has a skeleton ; if it has n't, put one there — is her theory. Her evening calls on us are in the nature of tours of investigation rather than card tournaments. Her methods are two, the direct

and the indirect. In the latter she takes the lead, becoming confidential about other people, offering an inducement to her listeners to become confidential about themselves.

"Now there's the Barker family, quite a *comme il faut* family, I assure you. Do you speak French, Mr. Wilson?"

I acknowledge my deficiency. French is the language of the court, and I am not a courtier.

"Well, *comme il faut* is the French for 'just as it ought to be;' there is nothing in English that conveys exactly that meaning."

"Does n't 'just as it ought to be' express it?" I ask.

"Not quite; very nearly, but not quite. French is such a refined language. Where was I? Oh, yes, I was saying that the Barkers are a *comme il faut* family: evidently so affectionate and fond of one another. They always appear that way when they are out together. But you should see them at home; there is nothing *comme il faut* about their home life. They don't speak to each other there. She retains her side of the house and he keeps to his. It is just the same as a divorce, only it has n't the sanction of the court. It prevents scandal, but it does n't stop talk. There can be ever so much talk without any scandal. Scandal is only when it is printed in the newspapers, Mr. Wilson."

She is a discriminator in the use of similes, this Mrs. Cummings.

"Did you ever know that about the Barkers, Mr. Wilson?"

I assure her, with a becoming sense of modesty, that I am not a close student of modern history.

"The Weavers are another *comme il faut* family — a very old family and highly cultured. She used to be a Miss Jefferson of Virginia, a direct descendant of Thomas Jefferson, she claims, although I don't believe it. She is seemingly devoted to her husband ; they were the fondest couple that was here this afternoon, to all appearances. I venture to guess that she called him 'my dear' and 'dearest' at least twenty times during the reception. But take them apart, and the *comme il faut* part flies away like the wind. There's no affection wasted then. It's — well, all I can say is that her name is often mentioned with that of the handsome Mr. Collins, who inherited a fortune from his grandmother. Mrs. Weaver is a striking blonde and very *recherché*, the French for 'select,' you know. Mr. Weaver is reported to pay marked attention to a widow here, a stunning beauty. She could n't be any handsomer if she grew on a bush. Now, mind you, I don't say that it is so ; I merely say that it is rumored. But when a thing is rumored nowadays you may be sure that it is so ; people are so careful of what they say behind your back. Did you ever know that about the Weavers ? "

I admitted that this revelation about the Weavers threw me into breathlessness.

So much for the indirect method ; it is only effective when pursued hotly by the direct method, which is like this : —

"I have heard that your son-in-law was a very excellent carpenter before he got rich, Mr. Wilson."

"People do bring that fact up against him, Mrs. Cummings."

"Ah, he was a carpenter, then?" Her gray eyes expand the full width of the sockets.

"I never saw him at work, so I can't say," which was the solemn truth.

"He made his fortune with great rapidity, did he not?"

"With far greater rapidity than I made mine."

"He lived in the same house with you, did he not?"

Is this woman a bureau of information, or a detective at large?

"When he paid court to my daughter, he was in our house so much of the time that people said he lived there. But you know better than I what value to place on what people say."

"This residence is somewhat more spacious — more *au grand*, as the French say — than your old one, is it not, Mr. Wilson?"

"My wife" — I winked at Mathilda — "says that she prefers the comforts and accommodations of our old house to those of this one in many respects."

"Ah, may I ask in what respects? I am so interested in the construction of houses."

"Was your husband a contractor?" I asked innocently.

"Indeed not, my husband was a lawyer; *voilà*

*tout*. I am simply interested in the construction of houses from the standpoint of æsthetics."

"Our home would have interested you but little from that point of view," answered I.

The next morning the servants were whispering to each other that Rounds was a bungling carpenter, who made his fortune in a second by a stroke of luck on the Board of Trade, and that he lived with us in a hovel that a beggar would despise. Mrs. Cummings possesses unusual powers of deduction. Give her a premise whereon to start and she will upset the world.

The gossip reached Rounds via Mitchell, I think; and he accused me of demoralizing his servants. I taught them how to malingering; I gambled at cards with them; I ruined the established discipline of the house. Order jumped out of the window when I entered by the door. I was more than welcome to the hospitality of his roof, — just as welcome as his own mother and father, — but if I wished to remain, I should have to mend my ways.

Jane was present when he reproved me. She did not interpose at the moment, but when he left for down-town she entreated me not to take his scolding to heart. It was only his way. I had reached that same conclusion unaided.

I kept mother in ignorance of this incident; but had I told her of the affair, she would have heard it twice; for Mrs. Cummings dropped in to speak with her. Mrs. Cummings's visiting cards — *cartes de visite* she entitles the article —

should be trimmed with a heavy border line of black. As Vogel says, they would be a forewarning.

I prophesied fair weather and balmy for to-day ; but no man is a weather prophet in his own city. The lion swallowed the lamb, and he is rampant as ever. Even were it the balmiest spring day, mother could not leave the house ; rheumatism has confined her to her bed. I am determined to go alone ; conscience will drive me mad if I postpone my duty longer. I must see my Ida.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE RETURN

IDA vacated the flat which we formerly rented to take her abode in the two rooms erstwhile occupied by the Vogels. I poked my head through the door, smiling broadly as a Jack-out-of-the-box. Jack was doomed to disappointment; his child was not at hand to make merry over his antics. Sulkily did he replace his smile with a frown, withdrawing into the box, railing at an ill-regulated world.

✓ Ensconced in the largest chair, I finally consented to aid the efforts of philosophy to dull the sharp edge of discontent, as I fell to speculating on a theory of human happiness. I can sum up my recondite thought in a line — Where we are matters naught; with whom we are is all-important. Will my name go down in the history of philosophy for the discovery of this ethical principle?

Again am I at ease in mine own inn, comfortable as if I had exchanged a new and tight-fitting coat for one that had accommodated itself through use to the contour of my figure.

Ida, if circumstances, if fate, if you will only allow us to end our last days with you, I will ask for nothing more, nothing better.

On Adolph's work-bench, which still stood in its same corner, lay a new clay pipe and a paper of tobacco; on the back of a chair hung my tattered smoking jacket; from underneath the seat stole the toes of my worn slippers. I donned the jacket; I discarded my heavy shoes for the slippers; I filled the pipe and puffed rounded wreaths of pure delight. How futile to speculate on the conditions of happiness! Ida will brim over with delight to find me thus, just as if I had never gone away.

I catch the sound of her step. Adolph's heart must have vibrated with this same sad-sweet music of love, commingled of nameless fear, bodiless anxiety, and inexpressible longing, when he listened to Ida tripping up the stairs. If it did n't — but it did.

A start backward, a shout of surprise, a bound forward, and she comes sailing into my open arms. Ida, my Ida! We cry and laugh, and laugh and cry together; but laughter ousts tears in a trice. Her lips begin one question and, without waiting for an answer, hurl forth another, as if an answer had nothing to do with the joy of interrogating. Finally we become normal.

"I have been expecting you every day; I wondered what had been keeping you away so long. It has been worrying me dreadfully. Of course I got your letters. But then your letters are n't you, are they?"

I frame my excuse as best I can.

"If you had n't come to-day, I should have sent

for you ; I made up my mind to that this morning. And mother is sick with rheumatism, you say ? And it's not serious — honestly not ? ”

“ Not a particle worse than ever. She will grieve more over not seeing you than she will suffer from all the rheumatism in the world.”

Ida lapses into her pensiveness. “ I will go back with you to see mother.”

“ That's a dear.” I speak impulsively, considering the sacrifice of pride it costs Ida to enter Jane's house. Jane has neglected Ida shamefully.

“ And you are happy, father ? ”

“ Don't I look it ? ”

“ Yes, but that may be because you are here with me.”

“ We are perfectly contented there, Ida. We have everything that our hearts desire. We wish something and presto ! we have it. One follows the other as quickly as a bell rings when we push the electric button. I am afraid that we have misjudged Rounds ; he treats me as kindly as if I were his own father, and I never expected that.”

“ It must be grand to live in a house like that, father ? ”

“ Grand ! Why, it's ” — how I yearn to disclose my eagerness to return here — “ it's the grandest thing in the world, Ida. You cannot conceive how grand it is until you try it yourself.”

“ I knew that you would like the change. I could afford to give you so little.”

An eruption in the bowl of my pipe — a volcano of smoke. The truth is tempting me sorely.

“Have you missed us much, Ida?”

She cuts short the exclamation that is crossing her lips with:—

“I have been very lonely sometimes. Yes, sometimes I have been lonely; but then I have to work so steadily that I don’t get much time to think. If I could only have you back, though; if I could afford it, I” —

“Ah!”

“Father, what made you say ‘Ah’ like that?”

“Did I say ‘Ah’? Well, I was n’t conscious of it. No, Ida deary, I think that it is better as it is. You see that you don’t have to toil like a slave now; and mother’s health seems so much improved in the new home.”

“I was sure that it would be.”

“The difference in heartache more than makes up for it,” reflect I to myself. And aloud: “Of course we miss you fearfully, but one can’t have everything in this world; that would be asking too much.”

“I am glad that you are so contented with Jane; I was positive that you would be when you grew accustomed to the different style of living. But, father, honestly now, supposing that I could earn enough to care for you and mother, that is if Jane would keep on assisting us a bit as she used to, would you rather come back, or stay where you are?”

My eyes fall on her thumb, worn from sewing.

I pretend to weigh her question seriously. Three long whiffs from my pipe.

"Well, Ida, taking mother into consideration — the improvement in her general health — the comforts, and the luxuries, I presume it is wiser to remain with Jane."

She is scrutinizing me sharply. God forgive me! I pray that I spoke that lie in the same manner in which I utter the truth.

I shift the subject adroitly, inquiring after the Vogels and Dr. Jan and the others.

✓ She dismisses them with a word, objecting to the obtrusion of a *tertium quid* in our intimate conversation. I attempt to divert her attention away from the main road down one of the byways of discourse.

"Ida, it is growing late; if you want to see mother, we shall have to start at once."

"Only finish one more pipe, and then we will go. It is so good to have you sitting on that chair smoking and talking to me, as if nothing had changed, as if you had never gone away."

The twilight had merged into the darkness when we reached Jane's house. Ida's mouth drooped plaintively when she beheld mother, warning me that Mathilda has aged since we moved here; that some lamentable change, which eluded my observation, has wrought its pernicious way in her. Even their greeting, melancholy with the suggestion of an immediate departure, of a lachrymose tearing away of mother from daughter, was pathetic. Ida's affected buoyancy of spirits fore-

boded tragedy to my gloomy mood. Unspeakably cruel of destiny to separate those whom love unites!

Ida took mother's hair down, combing and dressing it in the old fashion, chatting and frolicking like a child meanwhile. Afterwards we sought amusement in cards. All thoughts of impending tragedy sped before a blithesomeness that I have not held in my heart since boyhood.

It was after eleven before it occurred to Ida that she must leave us. Mathilda was bent upon transforming the lounge into a bed, that she might stay with us overnight; but to this Ida would not consent, nor would she hearken to my accompanying her home. She was not afraid to go alone; one of my years had no business out in such weather.

Despite her rheumatism and all its consequent aches and pains, mother insisted upon escorting her daughter to the hall door; and she would give ear to neither Ida's protest nor mine. I had my hand on the bronze knob, when I heard the violent slam of the carriage door. Rounds and Jane were back from the affair at the club. They were unusually early. Although no word had passed between us on the subject, I divined that Ida preferred not to meet them, and I had laid my fond plans accordingly.

All was not well with Rounds. His face quotes the rise and fall of stocks on the exchange. He was in one of those peevish, irritable moods when a glance suffices to throw his tottering temper out of balance, to let the brunt of it fall on the

unfortunate one who has tipped the wavering scales.

✓ Ida in the plain garb of a girl of the poor, Jane in the richness of ball-room attire, a diamond tiara in the golden crown of her hair, resplendent in silk gown and ermine cloak — what a gulf between the two!

To the disgust of the ermine, no doubt, the silk was brought in a dangerous proximity to plebeian cotton cloth; and Jane's arms hugged Ida as she planted a warm kiss on both of her sister's cheeks. I have noted that Jane is ever more tender when her husband has one of his morose fits.

"Dear child, why have n't you been to see me? Where have you kept yourself in hiding so long?"

"I have been home — so busy," stammered Ida.

Rounds was hanging his coat and hat on the large tree in the hall.

"Home is a good place for you," he muttered without turning.

"Will!" gasped Jane, clinging closer to Ida, as if to evince that her husband's sentiments were not shared by her. Ida flushed to the roots of her hair, and biting her lip, she clinched her little fists. I grasped mother's hand; her nerves were all a tingle, her vitality was spurting to her finger tips; I was holding a live wire.

The blood swirled to my head and beat at my temples. I remained speechless, the words refusing to marshal themselves into sentences invective

enough to express my indignation. In my mind was a confused jumble of apologetic phrases, poured forth by Jane; but I can remember vividly that Ida kissed mother and me, and glided softly from the house.

Jane flitted into our room in her nightdress, and remained with us until the first hour of the morning. She was sympathetic, consoling, and gently persuasive, although she was harassed by a sorrowfulness and depression that she strove to subjugate in vain. I recall that I felt embarrassed rather than relieved by her presence, and that I was fretfully awaiting the moment when I should be left alone with mother. It was apparent that Mathilda's desire was at one with mine. Yet when Jane took her leave, at last, we sat with clasped hands, silent.

It was only when fatigue, not somnolence, induced us to seek rest in bed, and when our room was filled with the darkness of the night, as if in dread that the light might hear our secret, that mother whispered:—

“Thomas, no one wants us here—nowhere—there is only one place—one home left—the poorhouse. They take it for granted that you are poor there; they do not insult old and poor people—like us.”

“Ida will take us back, mother. She would rather starve than have us inmates of the poorhouse. She will not allow it. It will kill her if we go there.”

“Are you sure that she wants us, Thomas?”



"Yes, mother."

"How do you know?"

"Why — why, she told me so to-day." Verity has ceased to be a virtue with me.

We arose early, long before the servants were astir, and gathered the few trifles that we brought hither. I scribbled a hasty line or two to Jane, regretting that mother and I were unable to accept her hospitality further. Nervousness toyed with my hand as the storm with a leaf, and I could not decipher my own chirography. My thoughts were as difficult to concentrate as thistle-downs in a high wind. The letter might give the impression of curtness, ungratefulness, and harshness. I tore it into shreds, resolving to communicate with her at length when calmness and serenity should favor composition.

With due caution we stole out of the house. I had a sensation that the butler was crawling behind us; I did not look back to confirm it.

Ida had barely begun the cooking of her frugal breakfast when we loomed up before her vision. Had the frying-pan been small enough, she would have dropped it into the fire. I spoke before her query dropped from her lips.

"Ida, we have come home. For God's sake take us back! We can't stand it there. We will live on a crust of bread and water, if you will let us stay with you."

"Take you back! Take you back? Are n't you ashamed to ask me that? I could cry for joy that you have come back. I should grow mad,

crazy, out of my head, if I had to live another month without you. Mother, father, forgive me," she burst into tears, "I lied to you, I drove you away because I thought you would be happier with Jane. I lied to you! Don't shake your head, father dear, I did; yes, I did! I said I could n't afford to have you with me, when I was dying, sobbing my life out, to see you leave me."

"We have been lying, too, Ida. We have never been so unhappy. We did n't spend a contented moment in that man's house; but we could n't bear the thought of burdening you."

"Then we have been deceiving each other all the time?"

"Yes," echoed mother and I in unison.

"Well, we shall end that right here. Mother, put on your apron; you will find it in the closet, hanging on the nail behind the door; and help me get breakfast. I am going to run over to the shop. Father, you can help, let me see — you can help eat it."

## CHAPTER XXV

### POOR PEOPLE

OUR brief sojourn in the palace fades in retrospect like the weird dream of a distant night. I must strain conception to believe that two months have flown since our exodus from Jane's. It is the very Maytime of our lives; the snows of the long winter of our discontent melt before the cheering sunshine. Not a single black rubric has trailed its fuliginous mark across our red-lettered calendar. Day has rolled after day as smoothly as a rubber ball down an inclined plane.

An unusual incident, which I hasten to record, fastens the morning of our return to the long chain of reminiscences with a shining link of pure gold. I was unwrapping my few valueless effects, preparatory to putting them away, when, in my impatient haste, I jerked the newspaper off that covered my flute case. Laughing at my unprecedented haste, Ida picked the torn and discarded journal up from the floor. "You mustn't be so extravagant with the papers; they are good for starting a fire. This is an Eastern paper; I'll put it away to read by and by." Folding it, her eye moved down the column of close print in disinterested contemplation. "Look at this! See here!" she shrieked.

"At what?" asked I, leaning over her shoulder. "Ida, if you don't hold that paper steadier, I can't read."

"What's the excitement about?" queried mother. "Do you find yourself the heir to an unclaimed estate?"

"Read it aloud, father. There at the end of the column. I can't."

With one bold, broad sweep of vision I took in the whole column, catching the names "Poor People" and "Vogel," as if they had been embossed in heavy letters. I floundered on as best I could, pausing at every period to recover the breath of which astonishment robbed me.

"To criticise 'Poor People' is to criticise nature; both have faults — in spots, but the few imperfections are well hidden by an overmastering beauty of outline and perfection in form. Mr. Vogel has held his mirror up to nature, and whilst the glass shone, his hand was steady and sure and his eyes keenly alive to every shade cast by sunlight and fleeting shadow. If here and there the quicksilver was worn and as a result the reflection marred, one must allow that the difference in mirrors is but the difference of temperaments. To no two is life the same; the reflecting mirrors of our senses are constructed that way.

"Sympathy, sincerity, and simplicity glow through the whole play like sunshine through the summer landscape; bits may escape the warmth and heat, but dapple and checker lend a beauty of their own, and absence of contrast is not far

removed from cloying monotony. The plot is woven of airy nothing, intangible ; doubly charming by the illusiveness of the binding threads. The characters move with ease and dignity through the invigorating atmosphere, unimpeded by heavy clouds of obfuscating plot and counterplot.

“Dialogue, action, situation, and business are fresh and new, bubbling and flowing from natural springs of native wit, quenching the thirst of an age nauseated by the stale and flat — although by no means unprofitable — waters of French indecencies, corked in dusty and salacious bottles. ‘Poor People’ is of the soil American ; its inspiration wells from things and folks here at home.”

The critique went on to give an analysis of the play, a description of the scenes, and to pass judgment on the merits of the various members of the cast ; but as you are to attend a performance later on, you may prefer to go with an opinion unbiased by the views of another.

The moment that I could retreat from the bombardment of exclamations and the fusillade of embraces, I ran down to see Herr Vogel. He cannot read English himself, and he received what he heard with a barrel of salt. When his wife’s reading corroborated mine, he threw the salt aside for honey. It was patent enough that this was the first news that he had had of the play and his son. He became wildly enthusiastic. “How could de sohn von Vogel de grand carver run von greatness away ? Ven he comes here de play mit, I shall be der a box in ; und de papers vill hav de picture

von de grand carver vitnassing de play von de great poet his son. I hav always said von Adolph dat dime would tell."

I could not tear myself away; he held me by the coat. He repeated the same remarks over and over until my eardrums cracked from the tedium. His anger kicked over the traces of restraint when I refused to present him with the article that sang the glory of his son. The paper should belong to him, he argued, since Adolph was his son and not mine. He commanded his wife to copy the column in pen and ink; when she refused, he railed and stormed, averring that she had no family pride. I managed to creep out of this household jar.

How swift the time flies! Spring has passed swiftly up this way, summer went chasing after, and autumn was not slow to follow. It is now the middle of September. And during all the intervening days not a word further concerning Master Adolph.

Ida sings and hums at her work. Hope springs ✓ eternal, and how the world changes and shifts as it springs and falls and falls and springs. "He will come back," she repeats with never failing cheer; "he has conquered the world, and he has gained the victory over himself. It may all be well yet. I am afraid to think of such happiness."

Often, while ostensibly reading or writing, I watch the transitory gleams of expression that cross her face. The smile declares, "He is coming back; he will be mine." It is Dan Cupid gliding along a path smoothed with rose leaves. The

frown, "You must n't allow yourself to anticipate like that; supposing that it all proves an empty dream?" And Dan Cupid slips and falls head over heels, only to get up and try it again, which is a trick Dan has.

To-day Herr Vogel floated into our rooms; he scorns to tread on earth. He is delirious with the frenzy of expectation. It was some minutes before excitement loosened its bit on his garrulous tongue.

"De play, it vill here de next week be. Mein sohn me has written. Der vas dree tickets your family for; two for de Dr. Jan, und two me, und two Malachy for. Adolph should me a box have sent, eh? He must a mistake hav made. I should be in a box, vas it not? De grand carver" —

Ida bursts into a hysterical laugh, and cuts his grandiloquence short. She has lost self-control. The wire too tightly drawn recoils or snaps.

"Will your son come on with his play?" I ask.

Ida's laughter ceases suddenly as it began, the life of her five senses concentrating in the nerves of hearing as she awaits Herr Vogel's answer.

"He writes de letter in ven he can, den he vill, und ven he cannot, den he vill not," and with that the old man glides from the room.

And this week — was there ever such a long short week in the history of eternity? Now time drags like a sled on snowless ground, now flies like a practiced skater on flawless ice. Advertisements, newspaper notices, billboards, and posters lower our hearts to the depths of impatience with a

four-ply cord ; they suffocate our yearning as they plaster the town.

Ida has laid her work aside ; the strain of doing without achieving has made her frantic. My wife alone remains calm, imperturbable, and smiling, as if reality could not depart a hair's breadth from preconception.

Vogel delivered a letter to me this morning on the stairway. The address was in Adolph's cramped handwriting. My impulse is to hasten to read it aloud to Mathilda and Ida ; on deliberation, I decide to first acquaint myself with the contents. The rick of good news is heaped too high to bear the laying on of another straw ; bad news would be like the application of a match to the inflammable pile. I breathe a silent prayer before breaking the envelope. The opening sentence — the last — I drain the quintessence at a draught. He will be here to attend the initial performance of his play, although he is frank and free to confess that were it not for the hope of seeing Ida he would remain in the East. The play has not been a success financially ; the press has given it a rousing welcome, but the public has been far less hospitable. He has lost the world, but he has gained the victory over self ; and weighed in the balance, his defeat is as nothing compared to his victory. The love of Ida has done what the promise to his mother could not do. He comes back to sue for her hand. He pleads with me not to refuse him this time ; not to hurl him back into the abyss out of which he has dragged himself.



Thus far his efforts to place my opera have been fruitless. He warns me, however, not to let discouragement make my heart grow sick, since he fosters the hope of landing a manager on the "Enchanted Island" some day. Upon my word and honor, the "Enchanted Island" escaped my attention until this moment, sinking into dwindling insignificance beside the altitudinous mainland of "Poor People."

This good news will make Ida's doubting heart beat with the full strength of faith. I dare not take the responsibility of consigning these two brave souls to lifelong misery — already have I caused them suffering too great.

Time has two dimensions. Length multiplied by intensity gives the true sum of duration; but length and breadth and duration and intensity must have an end at last — the event had come; the night for seeing the first performance of "Poor People" was here.

Beset by the dread of being one second too late, we started a full hour too early. We were the first inside of the theatre. It was all so cold and dark and still that Ida and mother gripped my hands, apprehensive lest the stuff of their dreams fade and not leave a rack behind. At any rate, they wished to make sure of me.

The duration of our perplexity was short. Vogel and his wife, magnificent in her scarlet dress ornamented with botanical puzzles, made their entrance. The advent of the pair was balm to our uneasiness; like familiar faces appearing in

a baseless vision, they lent an air of reality to the occasion. Vogel seated himself with much ado, and stood forth pompously to stare around; catching sight of us, he came trotting up the aisle to ask how we enjoyed it. "Exceedingly, so far," I answered.

Some one hallooed from the balcony. It was a signal from Malachy to advise me that he and his wife were prominently represented. A repetition of the alarm announced Dr. Jan Zwiefka and his wife.

A few stragglers strolled in. The members of the orchestra crawled out from the little hole under the stage. The desultory tuning of various instruments sent stray notes forth, moaning with deep melancholy, as if to lament their lot at falling in the dead hollowness of an empty house.

Gradually the spectators assembled by ones and twos and threes; as if by magic the theatre filled. The lights blazed with full force; the leader took his place on the estrade, waved his baton, and then, then — what do you think should happen? Dream on dream, I shuddered; the whole would topple with a crash! They were playing the prelude to my opera! I should have doubted my own ear, which is the last thing any musician is willing to doubt, but at that instant Ida gave vent to a low cry that escaped suppression. Her eye had caught the line at the bottom of the programme in fine print, "Before the first act the orchestra will render the prelude to Mr. Thomas Wilson's 'Enchanted Island.'" The prelude was encored, and

the leader bowed and scraped as if the compliment were intended for him instead of me. My left and right hands were squeezed until the circulation of my blood was threatened.

With commanding brows, gazing from side to side, Vogel paraded up the aisle to us. "Vas it not a grand tree-um-ph! All dese people, silks und satins und diamonds, in von education und refinement, hav come de play to see dat mein sohn hav written!" The curtain arose; he scudded back to his seat; the well-bred audience restrained its inclination to laugh and smiled. Just then I espied Jane and Rounds in the lower box, nearest to the stage on the left; a care-worn look has furrowed its way across his hard face, usurping the place of the sang-froid and superciliousness which were wont to stand forth like an extra feature. Things have not gone so well with him as they might, I learn. It is reported that a vast speculation is on the eve of failure. He made the world his bargain, and he drove too hard a bargain. There is strict legislation against usury of this kind; Rounds broke the law, and he must pay back the interest he extorted, with interest compounded on the principal he purloined.

Act One. The curtain disclosed the tenement home of the Moores, straitened down to the barest necessities of existence. The old machinist, gray of beard and hair, is trying to concentrate his mind on the model of a rotary engine to which he has devoted the long thought of his life. The baying of the black wolf on the threshold; remorse

over the lost situation; the thwarted attempts to secure employment, enshroud his soul in mournful depression, and he turns from his work in despair. His aged wife is quick to comfort him, clever to paint the future roseate, maugre the impossible paint and the bad brush which the present offers for the coloring. Darby and Joan, this pair; two withered roses, falling away petal by petal, clinging to the bush, breasting storm and rain solely that the one may have the other's companionship.

A lockout has deprived Moore's three stalwart sons of their positions; but, nevertheless, they come to the cheer of their father with all the buoyancy and hopefulness of youth, snapping their fingers in the face of care. Not a whit less willing are the daughters to drown all consideration of self in the enlivenment of their disconsolate parents. It is six against one, and the six overpower the one with their specious philosophy of "Things might be worse." The machinist resumes his work in a better frame of mind.

The entrance of Gore, Moore's quondam foreman, interrupts the inventor's labor again. The newcomer is a black-hearted, mercenary wretch, whose one redeeming virtue, an unredeeming vice rather, is ambition. Nature has favored the felon with an exterior attractive as Romeo's, a tongue persuasive as Don Juan's. He is enamored of the elder and more comely sister Mary, who craves the pleasures of wealth and the refinements of society, which she judges the foreman's peculiar abilities can win for her gratification. It evolves

that Gore's adoration of Mary is less tropical than his passion for her father's model of the rotary engine. He cozzens the unworldly-wise machinist out of the rights of his patents with a little ready cash; he fascinates the daughter with a less ready wit.

Robert Critchell, who dwells on the floor above the Moores, pays court to the younger sister Lottie, saint and seamstress too. He is a poet, a writer of stories by night, an optician by day; socialist and defender of the people at all times. Without a struggle she surrenders herself captive to the charms of this knight errant. He is worthy of this heart of gold in all respects but one, and the single exception rules his many-sided worthiness of no avail. The strong soul is a weakling before the temptation of drink. The parents refuse to trust "Golden Heart" to his dangerous keeping.

With this introduction of the principal characters the curtain goes down with a bow.

I cut away all the ornamentation and give but the undecorated substance; I tear off the warm flesh, quivering, and present but the dry bones of the plot — a skeleton bare and unattractive. The dialogue, sharp, crisp, and bright; the scintillating wit; the humor, the deep pathos — the thousand and one details that went to make up the great sum of the first act, I am forced to omit.

With an impatience pitched to the key of pain we awaited the plans of destiny for the various members of the Moore family.

Second Act. Same scene. Gore has transformed the old inventor's brain into a mint for coining his own fortune. Mary becomes the wife of the master of the mint, and is the only member of the family who can revel in the auriferous shower that should have refreshed them all. Moore's three sons leave the paternal roof to emigrate to the far West in quest of the success that eluded them at home. We witness the rollicking merriment of the nuptial festival — almost a cineometographic reproduction of our celebration of Jane's wedding. Lottie takes advantage of the joyousness of the occasion to plead the cause of her own lover. The court remains unconvinced, and the attorney threatens to run all the risks of contempt and act on her own volition. Unbeknown to their daughter, Moore and his wife appeal to the honor of the poet, beseeching him not to form an alliance so disastrous to her welfare. He bows submissive to their will. He departs for the West that night with Moore's sons, bidding farewell to all that makes his sad life endurable. The heart-broken seamstress, tortured by the mystery of her true love's desertion, and the helpless old couple remain alone in the tenement.

Here the curtain falls as if to hide their misery from prying eyes.

Would that Thomas Wilson might borrow Adolph's *Fortunatus* purse of inexhaustible wit and eloquence for the nonce; then could he pay an adequate tribute to the master workmanship of that second act.

No applause thus far. A few moist eyes conceal their shame beneath the surreptitious winking of eyelids and the stealthy fluttering of handkerchiefs. A sporadic ripple of approval, stirred by clapping hands, is heightened to a wave by the stentorian yell from the combined lung power of our friends Malachy and Dr. Jan. Vogel stands up and cries, "Adolphchen, mein sohn Adolphchen!" An usher taps him on the shoulder to command silence, while the parquette wonders who this crazy and demonstrative oldster may be.

Rounds's whole face has borrowed the hue of his florid spots; Jane's cheeks are flushed, and she twiddles her fan and taps it on her hand nervously. I take courage to glance at mother and Ida. They are gazing into infinity, sorrow circling in deep lines about their pursed lips and woe hovering over their blanched countenances. Ida's eyes rest on mine, and my coward soul turns away, not daring to meet her reproachful look. Yes, she knows the reason that prompted Adolph's desertion now. Hamlet-like, Adolph has caught my conscience with a play. May the punishment of the two kings in this tragedy free the blameless Ophelia from her unjust chastisement.

Third Act. The home of Gore the affluent fraud, preposterously arrogant in his victory won by stolen arms. Is Adolph a magician? has he the power of second sight? or is he simply an imaginative logician who deduces the series of events from the first half of a character's life which must inevitably befall his last half? The wretched

existence of Darby and Joan in the house of their daughter, forced thither by dire want, is as like mine and mother's at Jane's as if the playwright had been on the spot to make a literal transcription.

When the faithful seamstress visits her lonely parents in the mansion of her fashionable sister, and they beg her with broken voices to take them back with her to their wretched abode in the tenement and to let them die there — ah, when the curtain unrolled to close that scene, I wondered why the very walls of the building were not warm with human tears. But it was an unresponsive audience after all, few well enough acquainted with tenement people to appreciate this faithful picture of their lives.

Rounds and Jane had left the theatre; I saw their hurried exit. "The image of a murder done in Vienna made the galled jade wince."

Fourth Act; the last, alack! The old inventor and his wife, seated in the bare, squalid tenement, are holding hushed converse about the meaning of their daughter's departure. "Golden Heart" left early that morning, and she has not returned yet. One dreads to tell the other that she staggered under the burden of their support, and that she has deserted them, yet one feels that the other knows. They are alone in the world!

We observe in their talk, in their appearance, in their movements, that senility has led Darby and Joan back to their childhood. They are haunted by the hallucination that the world is a

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shadow, a dream, that forms to dissolve and dissolves to form again. Pitiful is their clinging to each other.

The illusion that their boys are coming home obsesses their vagarious fancy. They light the lamp, striving to bring cheer in the cheerless room. They bedeck the table with what deceiving vision conjures spotless linen and choicest viands. They hear imaginary conversations; the boys are come! They place them at the table; Michael is to sit there, Daniel here, William at his mother's left. The boys confess that they return poorer than when they went away. "Never mind," console Darby and Joan, "we have plenty; you shall not want so long as we are alive."

Then a lucid minute dawns upon them, and the old man whispers:—

"If they were only here; if it were only true!"

"Shadows, shadows; it is all a shadow," she answers.

Unexpectedly the seamstress, "Golden Heart," flings the door wide open and enters with her poet, who has returned from the West, and whom she has married clandestinely. She throws herself into her parents' arms and craves their blessing. The sons come in one by one and take their seats at the table as if they had never been away. The old people sink into their illusion again, mistaking substance for shadow this time. They die when the dream of the years comes true, believing it still a dream.

The curtain dropped; the play was done.

Adolph's old friends make up in enthusiasm what they lack in number. Malachy's applause counts for that of a whole row. We carry some of the indifferent ones away by our fervor, others by the force of a good example; still others join our ranks from mere good nature. We brew the storm, and the crash and thunder of approval breaks. Not until this second did I know that Freytag was up in the gallery.

The downpour ceases for a second or two; but Malachy, captain of claqueurs, leads the scattered ranks to another assault; we fall in, the rest follow. A mighty deluge of applause sweeps away the floodgates of restraint and carries all before it. The actors pass in front of the curtain again and again, first together, then singly. The cries for author come in tones that will not be denied. They are denied, nevertheless, for some time. Finally Adolph appears. He looks around in his slow, penetrating manner, after his fashion that we have learned to know so well.

"Is n't he ugly!" ventures a young lady behind us.

Ida turns to flash a contemptuous indignation upon her. I was sorry at that particular moment for anybody with views perverted enough to consider Adolph ugly.

"He has n't changed a particle," reflects Mathilda aloud.

Adolph's eyes travel down the rows of seats slowly; they stop at Ida. A smile flits across his face. He nods slightly; his eyes resume their

journey. The shouts of "Speech! Speech!" resound like a battle-cry through various parts of the auditorium. He smiles in modest acknowledgment, and walks from the stage. We insist upon more acknowledgment and less modesty. The hero returns, and says in the same way and ease with which he spoke at Jane's wedding dinner : —

"The little play to which you have chosen to accord so hearty a welcome, out of the kindness of your hearts, is simply a collection of photographs that I have taken of the poor people with whom I have spent my life and whom I love. Here and there I have colored the photographs with bits of fancy and sentiment of my own. Had you seen the original scenes and people before they impressed the camera of my brain, you would know that, after all, my task has been slight and of trifling worth, and all out of proportion to the measure of applause which you see fit to reward it. I thank you."

It is all over ; the spectators are filing towards the doors ; we are pushed forward with the crowd.

"His success has n't spoiled him ; he seems the same as ever," whispers mother.

I give no response ; I am resisting the impulse to call aloud, "Shadows! Shadows!" The transformation from dream to reality, and from reality to dream, has been all too sudden.

Some one presses through the throng and taps me gently on the shoulder. It is Adolph. Vogel rushes towards him, with mouth open, in readiness to resound a pæan of triumph. A disapproving

shake of Adolph's head, and the pæan is swallowed like a bitter draught.

Mathilda and I drop behind.

Adolph walks out of the theatre arm in arm with Ida.

How much better is this fifth act than the other four.

## EPILOGUE

IN these short annals of the people who are poor, laughter has claimed its pages as well as sorrow, and the tear-stained cheek has often touched the mirthful jowl. In the gloomiest of tragedies steps the sock of Comedy to gayly trip it a graceful measure or two; and ever-jealous Tragedy, with buskined foot, solemn and slow, marches through the merriest of comedies. Empty the soul that knows not trouble and care; rare the soul that joy enlivens not. Tears and smiles are the stuff with which life spins its many-colored cloth on the long loom of time. Fortune is a wheel that revolves without rest, and the man well rounded has met reverse.

The iron-gated palace bars not the entrance of Sorrow, and Happiness is not affrighted by the squalor of the homes of the lowly. Misery marches from the mansion to take the tenement unawares; Contentment escapes the hut of the beggar to seek the palace of the prince. For rank and place, none of these has respect. They are pilgrims who wander and wander; nowhere may they abide until custom frowns on change. It is written that they must knock at every door before their journey be done.

Mirth and Melancholy travel within hailing

distance, but never together ; the sandal of the one may blot out the footprint that the other has stamped on the dust of the highway, but never do they move side by side with hands clasped. Melancholy may sit on the doorstep without, frowning at the quirks and pranks of Mirth within, and Mirth may peer through the window with mocking face at Melancholy moaning at the hearth.

The tale of the tenement has been told, and the sum of my days has been told with the telling. The despair of my past shifts and breaks like the dissolving glasses of the kaleidoscope, merging in the gladness of my better time, perceptible only by the contrast its dark colors afford to the brightness of the perfect picture. Hope plays the prelude to the closing scene ; the "Song of the Shirt" has become a sad note, recurring rarely in the swift and swelling numbers of the symphony.

In the tenement, art battled with poverty and came forth proud and triumphant from the combat, blessing its enemy for the strength that the struggle gave, perceiving that in luxury and sloth the shield tarnishes, and rust dulls the edge of the sword locked in idleness.

In the tenement, love tried again and again to sink its delicate rootlets ; and again and again they seemed to dry and perish ; yet, though we divined it not, love is a resurrection plant imperishable by its nature ; its shriveled fronds, still instinct with vitality hidden, may curl convulsively to a crumbling brown and lay as dead for years, but lo ! it dips a minute in the drink it craves, and shim-

mers fair with lustrous green. With rough hand how ready was I to tear the dormant plant from the soil and consign it to the darkness of the dust-bin, instead of pouring water on its thirsty leaves with loving solicitude. Forgive me, Ida and Adolph; I knew not what I did.

The tenement is a mine? Yea, but the bold, daring, and persistent — with what treasures countless do they ascend to the sunlight of the upper-world! buying all its satisfying pleasures with the nuggets of ripe experience delved in the gloomy darkness when the crying spirit fainted with unutterable weariness. Descend thou, lest the glory of the ascension remain as the precious lore of a book seven-sealed.

Angel of Charity and Mercy, thy lamp was not kindled in vain; whilst the oil burned, shedding a grateful glow, I unearthed the gold I sought; and the end crowned my beginning. May the rays of thy lamp fall undiminished over the path of Adolph and Ida and the children of their children; for though their way wind through easier realms than mine, yet comes temptation to the sinless, the night engulfs the day, and the pit yawns for the unwary.





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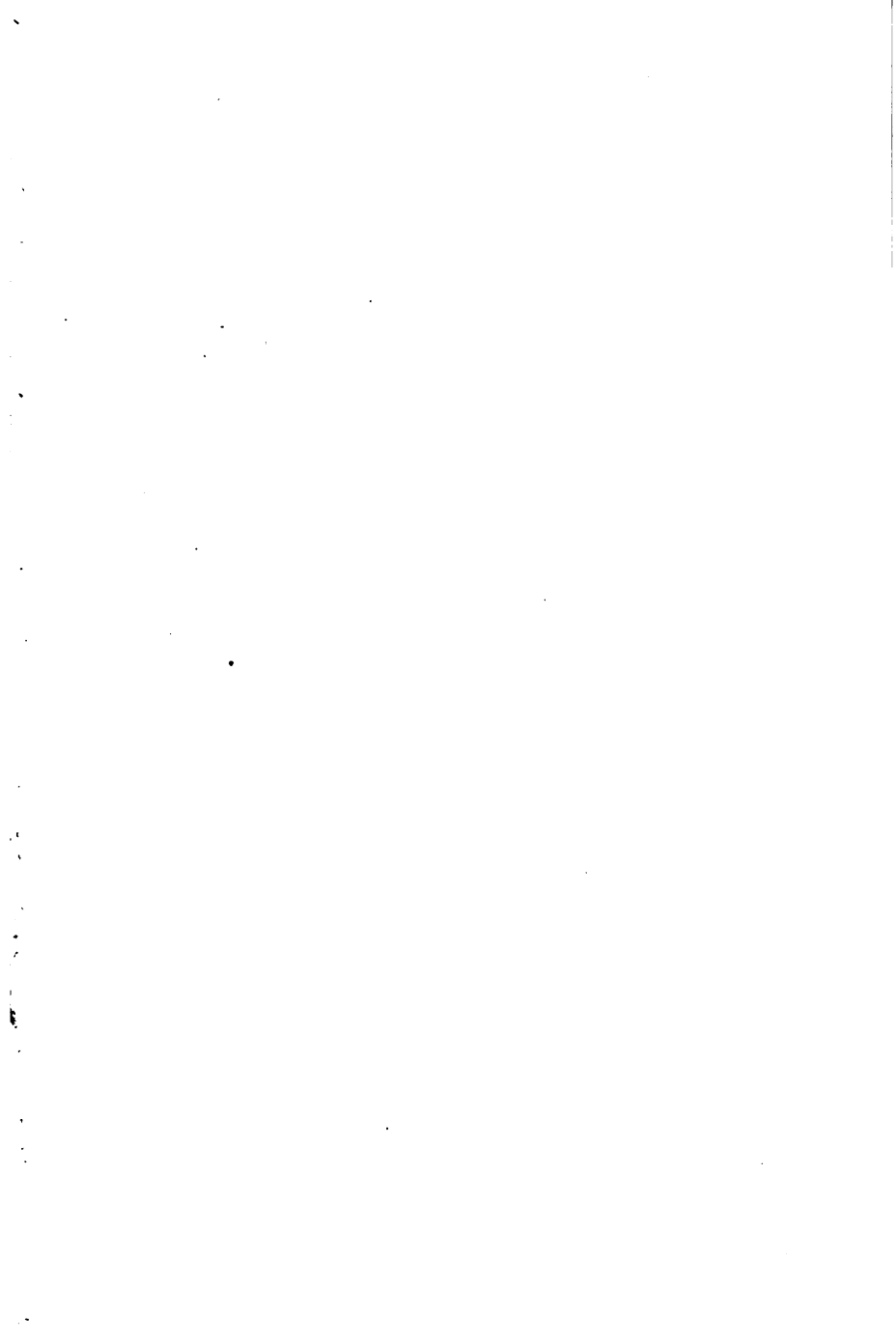
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